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ABSTRACT

This monograph describes the activities of the second year of a 5-year program of Transition Institute research to understand and assist evaluation of demonstration transition programs for students moving from special education to work and adult living. A case study approach was used to create a description of two transition programs, based on the perspectives of the various kinds of program participants and sensitive to the situational context in which the program operates. A Santa Barbara (California) School District project focused on transition issues of Mexican-American parents, problems with interagency agreements, the importance of a shared view of transition, and the perceptions of project staff concerning the ideal evaluation report. The second case study, of a community college program in Grays Harbor, Washington, was selected because it involved private sector coordinators who were not previously experienced in special education, an economically depressed community with high unemployment, and an outside evaluator whose previous work was known to be of high quality. The case study deals with the notion of local success versus national model, the effects of overpromising in grant applications, the evaluator's role in project development, generalizability, and reasonable expectations for evaluation. (JDD)

Perceptions of Effectiveness: Two Case Studies of Transition Model Programs

Robert E. Stake
Terry Denny
Lizanne DeStefano

TRANSITION INSTITUTE AT ILLINOIS

The following principles guide our research related to the education and employment of youth and adults with specialized education training, employment, and adjustment needs

- Individuals have a basic right to be educated and to work in the environment that least restricts their right to learn and interact with other students and persons who are not handicapped
- Individuals with varied abilities, social backgrounds, aptitudes, and learning styles must have equal access and opportunity to engage in education and work, and life-long learning
- Educational experiences must be planned, delivered, and evaluated based upon the unique abilities, social backgrounds, and learning styles of the individual.
- Agencies, organizations, and individuals from a broad array of disciplines and professional fields must effectively and systematically coordinate their efforts to meet individual education and employment needs
- Individuals grow and mature throughout their lives requiring varying levels and types of educational and employment support
- The capability of an individual to obtain and hold meaningful and productive employment is important to the individual's quality of life
- Parents, advocates, and friends form a vitally important social network that is an instrumental aspect of education, transition to employment, and continuing employment

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The Transition Initiative

In 1983, the U.S. Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) announced a priority in the area of the transition of students in special education from school to work and adult living. This priority came on the heels of the discovery that despite efforts to individualize instruction, to maximize integration, and to teach functional skills, special education students were not faring well upon leaving the mandated services of public education. High dropout and unemployment rates, long waiting lists, and dependence upon families and social systems were commonly cited problems associated with this population (Edgar, 1987; Hasazi, Gordon, & Roe, 1985; Mithaug & Horiuchi, 1983).

These findings led to a re-evaluation of the role of special education in preparing students for adult life; the lack of linkages between education, adult services, and private industry; and the need for coordination of services at state and local levels. Although these concerns are raised in P.L. 98-199, the first reauthorization of the Education of the Handicapped Act to mention transition, the regulations and guidelines for provision of services were not clearly specified. Instead, a considerable amount of discretionary funding was authorized to support a number of model demonstration programs across the country that were proposing or implementing innovative practices in the area of transition. By implementing and evaluating these model demonstration programs, individually and collectively, it was hoped that the federal government and the field would be able to:

1. give an accurate picture of the status of transition services in the United States;
2. identify areas of success, failure, and need;
3. inform policy and funding decisions as they arise in Congress; and

4. disseminate information on successful transition projects to other states and localities, thus expediting the growth of transition services.

Recognizing that some assistance would be required to upgrade the amount, quality, and conduct of evaluation activities, monies were authorized in the form of a contract to provide funded projects with technical assistance in evaluation design, analysis, and reporting.

The contract was awarded to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign to create the Transition Institute, a five-year program whose purpose is threefold: (a) to provide technical assistance in evaluation to more than 100 federally funded model demonstration transition projects across the United States; (b) to monitor the impact of the Federal transition initiative; (c) to carry out research on effective strategies for conducting and evaluating transition programs.

The Purpose of the Monograph

This monograph describes the activities of the second year of a five-year program of Institute research designed to understand and assist evaluation in the model demonstration programs. During the first year, extensive literature review and a panel of research methodologists, evaluation practitioners and theorists, and special educators were used to identify and examine the issues associated with evaluation in the transition projects. These issues included: local capabilities for evaluation, the importance of contextuality in evaluation reporting, the application of evaluation standards, the practicality of responsive vs. preordinate evaluation designs, and the utility of different types of evaluation information. Papers were written on each of these topics and published in

the monograph, Issues in Research on Evaluation in Transition (Stake & DeStefano, 1986).

During the second year an attempt was made to obtain local perceptions about the extent to which the issues identified in the first year were present at the project level and to assess their impact on the activities and attitudes of the project staff. Two strategies were used to explore these issues. First, a paper-and-pencil survey was sent to all past and present project directors to collect information on each of the issues identified previously (Stake, DeStefano, & Bergin, 1988). It was agreed that although this information would be useful in summarizing the common experiences of project directors, additional attention should be given to understanding the unique patterns of interaction among and within families, schools, and communities that seem to characterize transition programs. A case study approach was used to create a description of each program that is based on the perspectives of the various kinds of program participants and is sensitive to the situational context in which the program operates. The methodology was chosen because it allows for the inclusion of multiple perspectives in studying complex phenomena. The outcome of the case study is not valuation, or causal understanding, but enlightenment and in some cases bewilderment concerning the issues involved in developing, operating, evaluating, and replicating a model demonstration project. Two case studies are presented in this monograph, preceded by an overview of the model demonstration process for readers who are unfamiliar with it.

The Model Demonstration Process

The model demonstration process comprises six phases: (1) development; (2) implementation; (3) operation; (4) evaluation; (5) dissemination; and (6) replication/continuation. The development phase is undertaken for the

most part before the proposal is submitted for funding. Proposals are evaluated in terms of the clarity and completeness of the design, evidence that the commitment of responsible parties has been secured, the qualifications of key personnel, and the quality of the evaluation plan. In practice, many of these criteria are not in place until the implementation phase, which begins as soon as the proposal is funded: project personnel are hired, meetings are held, and interagency agreements are established. During the operation phase, program staff are responsible for doing what they said they were going to do--carrying out project activities and upholding promises that were made in the proposal. Especially in the area of transition, this is likely to entail orchestration of activities among diverse groups such as employers, public schools, community colleges, adult service agencies, and parents.

Evaluation can occur during or after the operation phase. In response to the criteria in the original request for proposal (RFP), evaluation designs are necessarily preordinate and tend to follow a goal-based approach. According to federal guidelines, the purpose of the evaluation is to document the effectiveness of the project in meeting its stated purpose and the purposes of the federal initiative. As stated in an RFP taken from a transition competition, the evaluation should document "(1) the grantee's progress in achieving the objectives in its approved application; (2) the effectiveness of the project in meeting the purposes of the program; and (3) the effect of the project on persons being served by the project." Although evaluation data may well be used formatively, the primary purpose is to provide evidence of program effectiveness for accountability purposes and to represent the projects to others interested in replication.

Dissemination may occur early in the life of a project, as it makes itself known in the milieu in which it operates. Brochures, press releases, video segments, and presentations may be developed during the first few months of funding to attract a clientele, rally community support, or establish a political base. In the later stages of a project, dissemination activity is again heightened, this time with the purpose of informing key parties to assure project continuation, to disseminate data on project effectiveness, and to encourage replication and continuation.

During replication, the viability of the model project is tested in another setting. It is an important test of the validity of the intervention, because the model demonstration projects are supposed to provide models that can be adopted by other localities. Replications can be purposive, initiated and monitored by the parent program, or they can be adventitious, when other sites adopt part or all of the program without the assistance of the parent program. Replication can be complete or partial, formal or informal, planned or unplanned. Continuation past federal funding should be planned for throughout the life of the project. As federal sponsorship decreases and ends, the project must make plans for its continuance in part or in entirety through state and local funds. Program continuation is based upon documentation of program effectiveness, availability of funds, political viability of the program and its staff, project visibility, and need for services.

The "Unofficial" Story

Evolving simultaneously with the official life cycle of the federal model demonstration project are the day-to-day activities in which students learn, teachers teach, meetings are held, products produced, and services delivered. Project directors must carefully maintain and balance both local

and federal perspectives during the lives of their model demonstration programs. This balance is not always maintained; at times local needs may override or undermine capabilities for fulfilling federal expectations. On the other hand, project directors who take seriously their responsibility for federal reporting and data collection may feel that they are shortchanging service delivery.

Project directors express the feeling that they are behind schedule before they begin. The preordinate program and evaluation designs proposed in the grant application fall prey to politics, staffing problems, and delays in funding. The possibility of accomplishing all that was specified in the original proposal decreases as the realities of the situation are dealt with in the implementation phase. On the other hand, most project directors say that they have managed to accomplish a great deal in a short amount of time, that major project goals have been fulfilled, and that existing services have been improved as a result of their programs (Stake, DeStefano, & Bergin, 1988).

The discrepancy between what actually occurs in a transition program and what is captured in an evaluation of that program is troublesome to program staff, funding agencies, and others trying to understand the complex phenomena of transition. Federal expectations of a preordinate, outcome-oriented, goal-based evaluation approach make it difficult for projects to take credit for unanticipated "getting ready" accomplishments or to accommodate setbacks. Disallowing unintended accomplishments and setbacks while promoting the evaluation of attainment of stated goals produces a situation in which programs that are successful in the eyes of staff and consumers appear to have fallen short by the standards of the funding agency.

The Case Studies

In this monograph we present case studies of two transition programs. Although the methodology remained the same, the issues that arose during the case studies varied. In his case study of a Santa Barbara, California, School District project, Terry Denny was concerned with the transition issues of Mexican-American parents; the problems with interagency agreements; the importance of a shared view of transition; and the perceptions of project staff concerning the ideal evaluation report. In his study of a community college program in Grays Harbor, Washington, Robert Stake found himself focusing on the notion of local success vs. national model, the effects of overpromising in grant applications, the evaluator's role in project development, generalizability, and reasonable expectations for evaluation.

There are differences between the projects and the persons who studied them in terms of community characteristics, time on site, familiarity with the topic, and background and role of the evaluator. There are also some similarities. Both projects dealt with placing people in employment settings, and both were located in schools or community colleges. In addition, both projects were attempting to build a program where none existed and to alter existing structures while doing so. Both projects were nearing the end of their funding cycle and facing the possibility that they would be re-funded.

The life of a model demonstration program involves a balance of research and practice, innovation and practicality, and generalizability and site specific needs. These projects are funded with the intent that in a relatively short period of time they will implement, evaluate, and disseminate a model of service delivery that will be viable in part (but

preferably in its entirety) in other settings. The need to validate the accomplishments and to understand the workings of such programs is great; the strategies that will enable us to do so are difficult to identify. In the case study that follows, a close look is taken at the role, conduct, and use of evaluation in transition programs, with the hope that increased understanding may lead to improved policy and practice.

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Evaluation at Grays Harbor

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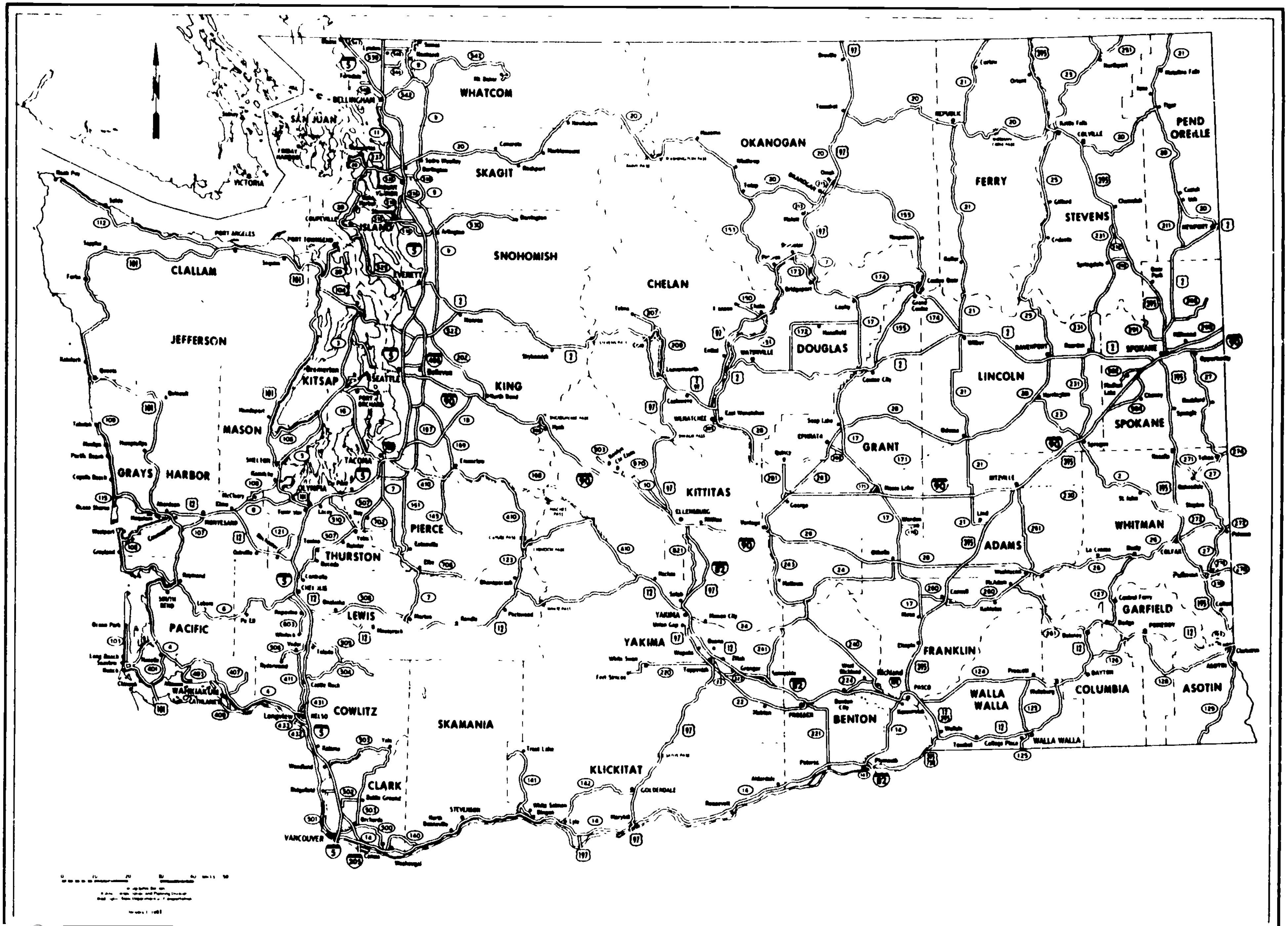
The Transition Project at Grays Harbor, Washington, provided a special opportunity for studying the role of evaluation in the development of a model site for providing transitional services to youth with handicaps. The community was economically distressed; the institutional setting was complex. For recent graduates near the bottom of their class the employment picture was bleak. Educational, welfare, and job assistance agencies failed to reach many needing help.

Needed in Grays Harbor County was an initiative. It came in mid-1985 from an unusual source, a five-year-old for-profit service agency, Organizational Architects, Inc. Co-directors Mike Taylor of Westport and Carol Richardson of Olympia sought and obtained funding from the U.S. Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services (OSERS) to develop a model transition program. They sought and obtained cooperation from a school-district-based pupil services cooperative, the local community college, and an existing parents' support group. Together in a two-year period they identified 151 unemployed young adults, brought 35 to the college for courses, and saw 11 through to employment.

Federal funding carried with it an obligation for formal program evaluation. A vigorous critical analysis was promised by program personnel. A highly respected specialist entered into contract to assist the effort. The evaluation circumstances were in many ways similar to those at a hundred other transition projects across the country, and similar to those of projects expected in the foreseeable future. In each case there is



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a commitment to evaluate, an effort to review procedures, and some kind of assessment of progress and impact.

And in almost all cases, efforts to evaluate fail to tell us much of what we want to know. Among the problems are: differences in federal and local expectations, lack of attention to contexts, and uncertainty about how flexible evaluation designs should be. This case study was undertaken to examine the role of evaluation in the conduct of such projects.

The Case Study

My study of evaluation roles and issues depended on a thorough understanding of the transition program at Grays Harbor. Throughout the 1986-87 school year, I examined the workings of the program, the setting, the network of individuals and agencies which created special transition services in this rural and coastal county. I start the case report by introducing personnel:

Tom Owens, evaluation specialist, Northwest Regional Educational Lab;
Carol Richardson, co-director, Organizational Architects, Inc., Aberdeen, WA;
Mike Taylor, co-director, Organizational Architects, Inc., Aberdeen, WA;
John Harp, vocational instructor, Grays Harbor Transition project;
Gene Shermer, Academic VP, Grays Harbor Community College;
Joseph Malik, President, Grays Harbor Community College, Aberdeen, WA;
Gary Higashi, Vocational Director, Learning Assistance Center, GHCC;
H..ry Carthum, Director, Grays Harbor Pupil Services Cooperative;
Dave Sander, Grays Harbor Pupil Services Cooperative;
Claudia Self, Grays Harbor Advocates (parents support group);
Rosemary Polosaari, Grays Harbor Advocates (parents support group);
Pat Mahalik, Transition Advocate, Grays Harbor Advocates
Lee Busco, Youth Employment, Grays Harbor County;
Ken Colburn, special education teacher, Amanda Park School;
and other agency people, employers, work supervisors, and trainees--and
Robert Stake, evaluation researcher, University of Illinois, because in gathering my data I too became a minor character in the happenings.

The Transition Program

Two people calling themselves Organizational Architects, Inc. designed and implemented a . laborative assistance "model" linking nine rural school

districts, their pupil services cooperative, the state's Division of Developmental Disabilities and Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, and community-based organizations, with the community college and "private sector." The aim was to identify and meet personal and employment needs of area youth with mild handicaps (learning disabilities) who were out of school and ineligible for other aid.

Co-directors Richardson and Taylor sought out and talked to the youth referred to them, as many as they could find in the 1869 square-mile Olympic peninsula county. For basic skills training and workplace orientation they brought 25 to the Grays Harbor Community College campus just south of Aberdeen. As in most special education programs, males outnumbered females, in this group 19 to 6. The trainees ranged in age from 17 to 30. Ten had finished high school. One by one they left the Project, averaging a little less than four months of training and entry-level employment under supervision. When the Project officially terminated during the summer of 1987, six of these 25 were known to be not working, another six had dropped out of sight, and the remainder were employed in such work as lumbering, building maintenance, engine repair, institutional housekeeping, and clerking.

The Project brought vocational educator John Harp to campus to teach job preparation skills. He taught about choosing a job, applying for work, interviewing, and about relationships between employers and employees. He often elicited long discussions of problems such as observing petty theft by fellow employees. The students were enthused to be "college students." Harp gave less attention to a student's learning difficulties or weakness of social skills than most special educationists would have.

Disagreement as to instructional strategy and the fact that more than a year passed before the first students were brought to campus contributed to

rather lukewarm participation by the Pupil Services Cooperative and thus, by the local schools. In contrast, though slow to emerge, an enthusiastic parent group calling themselves the Grays Harbor Advocates provided hundreds of hours of community contact with students and parents. Response to the transition services from Community College administrators was mixed, some noting reluctance of their supporters to welcome students with learning disabilities to campus. Still, they provided one of the instructional strategies and, ultimately, an institutional home for courses.

The Grays Harbor Transition Project was funded by the federal government for a two-year period in the amount of $140,000 to create a model transition service. Announcements in the Federal Register had encouraged proposals from private sector, for profit, entrepreneurs. One question to be evaluated was whether or not such a company as Organizational Architects, Inc. could improve upon ordinary arrangements in the difficult job of coordinating public institutions and volunteers trying to help school leavers with handicaps.

The Setting

Through the eyes of participating trainees the program consisted of two or three people and a couple of classrooms in the vocational wing at Grays Harbor Community College. A mile south of the bridge leaving the Aberdeen business district, further still from the wood-loading docks at Hoquiam, the college nestles in an evergreen hillside. Students here are the Grays Harbor "Chokers," a choker being one who locks the chain around a load of timber. A Bunyonic lumberjack marks the entry. Not much else about the College beckons youngsters having marginal experience in high school. Faculty members and administrators are proud of the College's academic program.

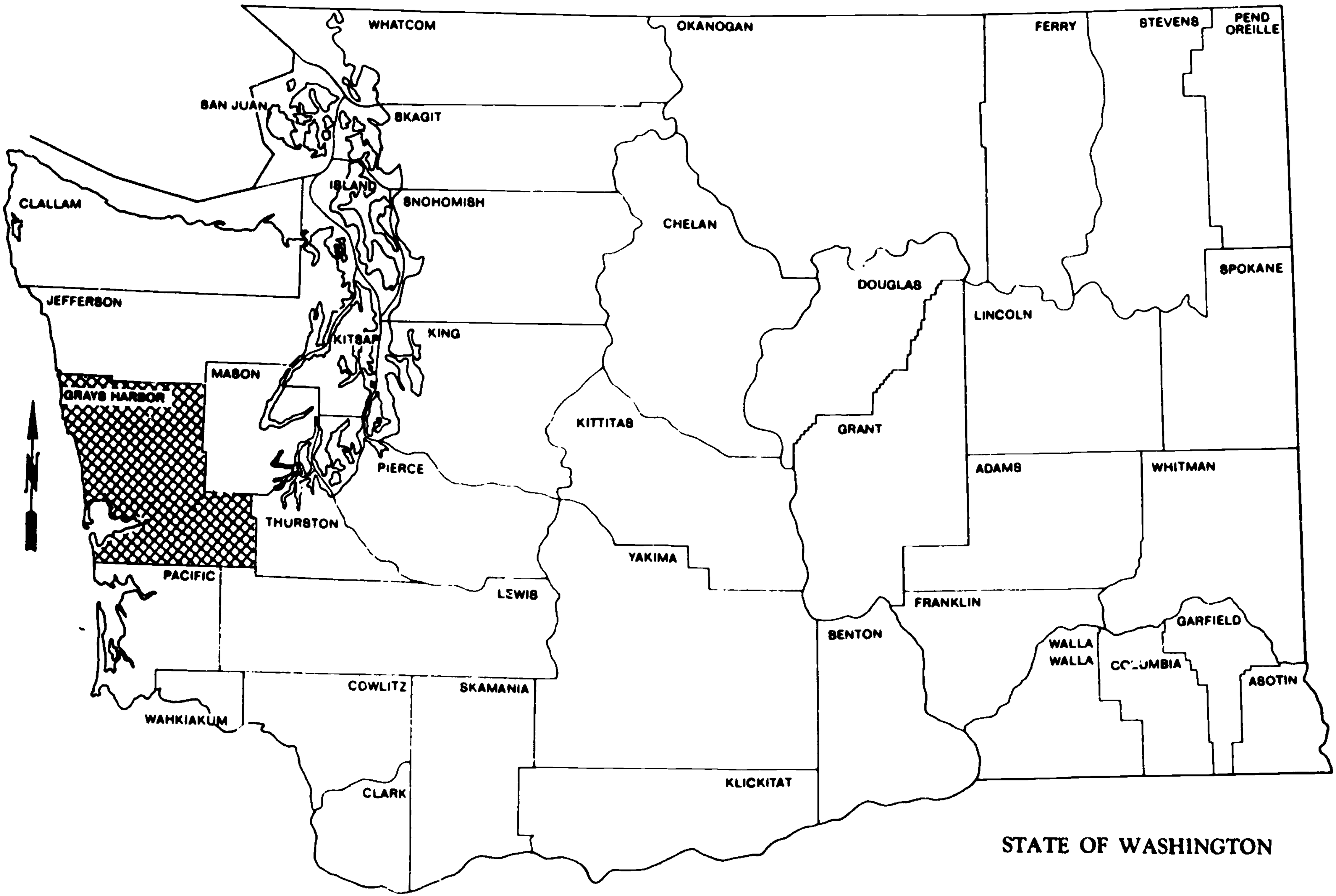
Most folks in this vast mountain, coastline, rain-forest county live around the pie-shaped harbor (see map, following page), though few are close enough to see the gray whales frequenting its mouth. At the Westport lookout station, tourists count whale watching and great expanses of beach among the pleasures. The mountains hide the villages, Quinault, Grisdale, Artic. Montesano has the court house and a delicatessen much to my liking. A second pie-shaped wedge, the Quinault Indian Reservation, presses inland from Queets and Taholah. Running north and south, US 101 cuts the county quietly; US 12 runs east and west, more like slash and burn.

Aberdeen and Hoquiam are union towns. Still, more of the county's trees are cut and hauled by independent rigs than by Weyerhaueser. For would-be workers, knowing someone somewhere is important. The project staff seemed to know the people and the territory. In the eyes of a trainee, the transition staff people came by car or called by phone. They knew the boss or supervisor, often spent a while chatting about recurrent mists, 10% unemployment, or the grocery-worker strike.

It's a rural place. The sea is near, but people live close to the land. The work ethic is strong. Many young people leave home reluctantly. Even to take a job in the next town is a major decision, especially for a daughter. The welfare roll is long. Whether or not a youngster's job will cost more in welfare deduction than it brings in is an issue parents debate.

Program Activities and Alliances

What I describe here happened within the second year of the project, ending July 1987. Young adults no longer in school and showing signs of mild intellectual handicap and needing employment were identified. From high school records and through the grapevine the list grew, ultimately reaching 151. The College, the parents' group, and the Pupil Services



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Cooperative, all made referrals. Advocates Claudia Self and Rosemary Polosaari, themselves parents of special education children, tracked down many of the youth and brought their records up to date.

According to the evaluator's report, contact was made and initial information obtained on 103. Educational skills were tested and work experience discussed. About a third were referred to agencies such as Timberline Opportunities, a sheltered workshop. Eligibility requirements were not strict. Most had been identified in school as special education students, but not all. One, for example, had had a brain injury after leaving school. If talk with the young adult confirmed an interest in further preparation and suitability for entry-level vocational work, in they came.

Their interests and self-esteem were explored. One girl wanted to sell women's wear, but only the fashionable. A young man already knew small engine repair, but hesitated to expose himself to an employer's expectations. Some expressed reluctance to leave home. Some had unrealistic ideas about careers and educational opportunities.

With assistance from the Project, all enrolled in basic skills (reading and math) courses offered by the College. Additionally, in groups of eight or ten they learned about characteristics of employment generally and about specific employment conditions there in the county. John Harp's instruction was group-organized, casual, based on vocational materials he had developed earlier. His approach was personalistic, contrasting with the behavior-analytic "cooperative education" approach vigorously advocated by Gary Higashi, vocational coordinator at the College. Little instructional collaboration between Harp and Higashi occurred, but perhaps little was needed.

After a slow beginning, collaboration at administrative levels did occur. The College, the Advocates, and the Cooperative participated in policy, tactical, and information-sharing meetings. Assistance of the State Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and Labor and Industry (L&I) office was obtained. Even at the end, full-blown cooperation from any of the participating agencies could not be taken for granted. For them, of course, transition goals lacked priority and were not always pursued as they would have pursued them. But after extensive effort, individuals within the agencies were helping out. In the evaluation report John Hart was quoted as saying,

> In the past DVR wouldn't work with the Community College. State agencies satisfy their needs in their own formal way, i.e., paperwork. Now they are doing very well, in fact, tremendous.

The Pacific Mountain Private Industry Council provided JTPA (Federal) funds which enabled new employees to work for a month at no cost to the employer. This was a key matter in getting actual work experience for the students. And it occasionally resulted in a regular job. Each employer agreed to identify a person to supervise each trainee. Time and work evaluation sheets such as the one on the following page were kept. This sheet (an elaboration of a form suggested by the project evaluator) is for a student who did maintenance work at a retail outlet during the first two weeks of January. He accrued 16.5 hours and was paid $55.27. A copy of his bank deposit slip also was kept in project files. He continued to work at least four additional weeks. Students could remain with the program as long as they liked. They could request additional work try-outs. Several remained in the program for more than 7 months. Most stayed about three.

Project co-directors Richardson and Taylor spent their time, half-time each officially, facilitating the collaboration. Carol handled more of the

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PROGRAM

E AND PROGRESS

PERIOD: Jan 3 to Jan 16, 1987

E(s) [redacted]

IMMEDIATE SUPERVISOR: Sandra Campbell

ATION TITLE: Maintenance Worker Trainee

Please include the exact hours worked by the trainee(s). At some time you may be asked to verify this.

	SAT.	SUN.	MON.	TUE.	WED.	THU.	FRI.	SAT.	SUN.	MON.	TUE.	WED.	THUR.	FRI.	TOTAL
DATE	1/3	1/4	1/5	1/6	1/7	1/8	1/9	1/10	1/11	1/12	1/13	1/14	1/15	1/16	
HOURS	Ø	Ø	Ø	1.5	3	Ø	Ø	Ø	Ø	Ø	3	3	3	3	16.5

TRAINEE'S PROGRESS SUMMARY: [redacted] must learn to be more serious while on the job. He has a tendancy to Joke at the wrong times. He is a good worker and understands his supervisors directions with only one example. He does stay on task ~~and~~ until job is completed. He is Thorough.

I certify that the hours reported above were spent in direct trainee/trainer relationship, and that the salary/wages paid for this period are correctly stated herein. all legal requirements have been fulfilled.

Sandra K Smith

SIGNATURE OF SUPERVISOR/SUBCONTRACTOR

[redacted]

SIGNATURE OF TRAINEE OJT DATE

central office function, Mike the face-to-face contacts with employers, supervisors, and trainees at work. During the final 10 months of the project, evaluator Tom Owens identified almost 500 institutional contacts.

A special education transition program on campus runs into strong commitments to lecture-hall type instruction. John Hart said, "Many on campus were uninformed about learning disabilities." A key event occurred in January of that second year. Chatting about the upcoming Superbowl, Hart and his students made a lunch bet. Hart lost, and ingeniously invited College President Joseph Malik, DVR and L&I administrators, and several other agency people to join them. Lunch lasted several hours. The administrators appeared to move toward advocacy; the students appeared to regard themselves with greater respect. It seemed at the time a turning point. But a second event may have nullified the first. In late spring a trainee was accused of stealing at the worksite. Enthusiasm lost something of its edge.

By late spring (1987) the Project was nearing its end. As intended, plans were debated for transferring coordinating responsibility to one of the existing agencies. College authorities seemed reluctant to continue services to this "special population." As he described the College to me, Vice President Gene Shermer indicated that vocational courses had only recently become 30% of the offerings. As to students with handicaps he said, "We are novices in this." He seemed favorably disposed to the work of the Transition Project, and by May seemed ready to assume responsibility for its instructional activity. But it did not happen. Discontinuation was not discussed with Richardson, Taylor, or Harp. John Harp was hired by the College as Developmental instructor, but no further transition courses were offered. According to Harp, on his own he reworked his activity packet for

enhancing job-readiness skills and these were made available to students for self-study by Pat Majalik of the Advocates group. JTPA funding for entry-level employment support continued to be available through Lee Busco of Youth Employment--as it was during the two years the Project operated.

Earlier, with a few months to go, wanting to continue and needing funds but cognizant of OSERS policy against post-project continuation funding, the co-directors submitted an application to 'start" another OSERS project locally. (Originally the co-directors had wanted funding for three years but got it for two.) The new proposal was not funded. Formal evaluation of the initial project had not been completed, so an evaluation report did not figure in the competitive review.

This transition project had been funded to be a model project. It was not unusual for Mike Taylor to speak about the importance of keeping records of issues and problem-solving efforts so that educators elsewhere (the allusion usually to a rural site, once he said, "down in Tuscaloosa, Oklahoma") could be guided by the difficulties and successes of this project. Mike savored the idea of writing up the project's "life story." With Richardson and with us visiting evaluation specialists, he discussed issues and efforts--but as of this writing, 4 months after project termination, the logbook, the diary, the essays, had not appeared. A final report was "on the way," but it seemed unlikely that it would greatly facilitate generalization. The key thing is that seldom did the staff examine situations in a way directly leading to an understanding of what was particular to this Grays Harbor venture and what might generalize to many settings. Right or wrong, the staff felt that the Grays Harbor Transition Project would be most valuable as a model if it succeeded, and everyone

dwelt far more on making it a success for a local constituency than on making it a learning model for a national constituency.

Project Evaluation

In the original Organizational Architects, Inc. proposal, Richardson and Taylor included an extensive plan to evaluate the process and product of transition service in Grays Harbor County. I photo-reduced that two-page section of the proposal and include it here. Whether or not their fulsome promise to validate their model was serious, realistic, and optimally suited to the Project is a key issue of this evaluation case study.

Among institutional resources identified at the end of the proposal is the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory of Portland, Oregon. The authors stated that the Lab's "expertise will be utilized to develop appropriate evaluation instruments and an on-going evaluation mechanism which will allow for changes during program implementation." Working on employability of disadvantaged youth, the two co-proposers previously had had a productive relationship with Tom Owens of the Lab and looked forward to his help again. (Harry Carthum had taken steps to bring in a University of Washington evaluation specialist, but Owens was the Richardson-Taylor choice.) Owens clearly had the expertise cited above, a predilection for good instrumentation plus cautiousness about overly-fixed designs. A flexible design allows attention to new issues and understandings as they appear. In March, Owens spoke to me of his frame of reference.

> I've been doing [federally funded] case studies with problems pertinent to those of youth in Grays Harbor County, especially reflecting the economically troubled fishing and timber business there. Vocational education, special education, basic skills--the evaluation studies overlap. You get maximum mileage for the evaluation dollar by doubling up in this way.

The project evaluation methodology consists of an on-going process that includes the following components.

Evaluation of the project (model) and their procedures. The effectiveness of the model will be evaluated in regard to the strategies utilised as well as the outcomes of the project.

Documentation will be utilised as a quantitative procedure to describe specifically what has occurred during the life of the project. The documentation will consider such items as appropriate individual record, organisation of records, numbers of individuals in a program, consideration of staff, various meetings, use of the advisory board, exchange of information between various agencies, etc. This will result in a project being measured against the expected outcomes as designed in the project.

The evaluation will also determine the impact of the project. The evaluation will study the results of the strategies utilised in the project in relationship to the previous status of the handicapped individuals. Questions to address the impact may be: Were more students placed into some kind of a training program? Was job training improved? Were more options and alternatives found for the handicapped individual? Were more students involved in transition planning? Did the educational curriculum adapt and become more responsive to post-school needs at the communtiy college level? Were difficult clients dealt with, followed-up and helped? Did more joint planning and cooperative techniques occur between the local education agencies, DDD, DVR, and community based organisations? Did the private sector businesses become involved in the training of handicapped individuals? Were parents affected in a constructive positive fashion? The impact will also be measured against the goals and objectives of the project. And the final impact may be measured in the accomplishment of individual goals and objectives as designed in each of the individual's Individual Training Plan.

Another evaluation component will be that of the effectiveness of procedures utilised between the various agencies involved. Therefore, all procedures will be evaluated to see how well they were accepted and utilised. Staff satisfaction will be addressed as well as the leadership satisfaction. Of primary concern will be the satisfaction of the parents involved. As parents' satisfaction increases, so will parent participation increase. Another primary area in terms of satisfaction will be the use of the private sector businesses. Here again, were the businesses satisfied with the individual and are the businesses willing to continue providing support in terms of training and employment of handicapped individuals?

The students' progress will also evaluated. The effect on the students who are involved will be evaluated via the Individualised Training Plan evaluation component. The ITP development will include staff from the local education agencies, the community based orgaisation, and the local community college. This team will be responsible for the objectives and plans necessary for the transition of an individual student from special education placement into post-school job or training following graduation. All files of those who enter the program will be reviewed. In addition, a special review of special education graudate files will be conducted to determine the appropriateness of placement into the program.

The tracking system of all individuals who have gone through the program will also be evaluated. The evaluation will consider the data that has been kept and utilised to potentially evaluate and modify the project's curriculum, alter and expand existing post-school opportunities and to further develop the transition procedures for placing handicapped individuals in the most appropriate and beneficial post-school program.

The project management team will be evaluated, too. This evaluation may include methodology for reports and record exchanges, communication, satisfaction of participating agencies and the overall effectiveness of the management teams.

The final portion of the evaluation will consider the model and its ease to be replicated in other areas of the state and nation. The evaluation will focus on the following areas Are the model objectives general enough for other community members to use as a guide? Can they adopt the strategies to their own situations so that the objectives are satisfied? Are the procedures written with consideration for the wide variance of job opportunities in each area? Are there enough local resources to be able to implement the strategies? Is the model flexible enough to account for varying values, population, needs, and a physical layout of a community? The final area in terms of evaluating a model and its ability to be replicated elsewhere will be considerations centered around cost. Is the model truly cost-effective?

Because the evaluation will be an on-going process the evaluation team will meet quarterly with the project team. These "in-service conferences" will be employed for support, project modification, and potential conflict resolution and project guidance.

There will be three personal strategies utilised in the project evaluation. These strategies will be (1) interviews with the project coordinators and managment, (2) on-site interviews in two school districts in the special education consortium and (3) a variety of questionnaire surveys of the remaining special education consortium districts, and all staff. Each strategy will be used to confirm the findings from the other two and the findings will comprise the final report.

Although the Project's federal contract was signed in October of 1985, its evaluation subcontract was not signed until August of 1986. Owens provided reports on the following 1986-87 schedule:

Sep 30	Evaluation Progress Report
Oct 15	Evaluation Instruments Package
Nov 13	Evaluation Instruments Package (Revised)
Feb 20	Evaluation Progress Report
Aug 30	End-of-Year Evaluation Report

Richardson and Taylor wanted Owens as their evaluator partly because they knew he would help them think through their operations. They knew he would not be impersonal and excessively objective in serving as outside assessor of project quality. They wanted an evaluator who measured accomplishment of both staff and students, but not one who attended exclusively to quantitative data. They expected technical assistance from him. Owens had impressed them as knowledgeable and informative about research on vocational education for special populations. They looked to him as management consultant as much as program evaluator.

Although its federally funded Transition Institute provided technical assistance on evaluation and other matters, OSERS had expressed no objection to having evaluation specialists provide technical assistance as well as summative evaluations to individual projects. Taylor invited Owens to the Annual Meeting (of transition project directors) in Washington, D.C. to assure that the Grays Harbor project evaluation would be "in compliance" federally as well as useful locally.

Owens said, "They were quite open, letting me choose the design and instrumentation most appropriate." He recognized that Carol and Mike needed more evaluation than OSERS required. He told me,

> They planned to get JTPA funding too so I was interested in documenting student impact as well as possible. I could have "gotten by" with a more streamlined approach. Federal requirements were relatively minimal. At the Annual Meeting they

> had a whole bunch of questions to be covered in the final report. I had already drafted the evaluation plan but I went back and revised it to make sure the instrumentation was comprehensive enough.

Owens called for the following management-information records:

1. Learning contract (for individual trainee at worksite),
2. Timesheet (for individual trainee at worksite),
3. Counseling notes (for observations of work arrangement),
4. Employer evaluation (of the Transition Project),
5. Work performance evaluation (for individual trainee at worksite),
6. Applicant information sheet (for individual trainee to fill in),
7. Student data card (for staff to keep),
8. Individual training plan,
9. Program completers survey,
10. Log of contacts with agencies and individuals--

and, deleting his earlier recommendation of the ETS Youth Career Development Test, he identified the following evaluation instruments and data sources:

1. Referral correspondence,
2. High School and Beyond and other research literature,
3. Brigance Diagnostic Inventory of Essential Skills results,
4. CTB/McGraw Hill Test of Adult Basic Education,
5. Interviews by the external evaluator,
6. Trainee writing assignments,
7. Washington Occupational Interest Survey,
8. General Aptitude Test Battery.

The 11-month evaluation contract was budgeted at $5,000. During the period, Owens visited the site four times. Relationships between parties remained cordial throughout the period. Owens depended on the Project staff

to keep records and administer the tests needed. His final report was based considerably on his earlier progress reports. Its preparation was delayed by late returns of trainee activity.

In his first evaluation progress report Owens described his September site visit. Citing Dave Sander of the Pupil Services Cooperative, he described the Project's special population:

> ... The 9 high schools in the area graduate about 30-50 resource students a year, of whom about half don't fit into employment. They are not low enough to be considered developmentally disabled but not high enough to qualify for some other programs.... Most of the youth who will be in this program are specific learning disabled--way below grade level in math and reading, some social behavioral problems, a few mildly retarded, none are physically handicapped alone, low socio-economic status, some drug problems, and disfunctional families. These youth usually had one to four periods a day in resource classes, several periods in a regular class, and some went to work-study. Small businesses are usually unwilling to take on these youngsters [even] with JTPA help. The youth need a person with whom they can identify .

Owens also wrote of the Community College situation, where no-cost adult basic education was offered to all with a high school diploma, which many of these trainees had. A number of the referrals to the Transition Project were from the College itself. The College had no staff members trained in special education.

For his part, Owens indicated an optimism in working at the site. With eyes sparkling, he cited staff criteria for success of the Project, including: "change in student self-concept, independence (ability to handle oneself), and the number who enter employment or further training." In his February progress report Owens summarized major evaluation-related events and noted that the instrument package data were being collected by John Harp on all students. During his February site visit, Owens chose a student situation to inquire into and wrote the following:

> The student interviewed began the program in November, 1986. His father asked the community college about classes for the son

> who has a reading disability. The student is interested in automotive repair and wanted to learn to do job interviews better. Although he had learned job interviewing techniques while in a high school career class, that occurred in his freshman year and was in a large class then. Through the Transition Project he is learning it better, in a smaller class setting, and the interviews with employers are videotaped and evaluated later.
>
> He had previous mechanic experience working for his father in a family-owned motorcycle business but is now working 25 hours a week through the project in car and diesel mechanics. He has a chance to do everything from tune-ups to major overhaul because the shop is small with only 3 employees. He will receive JTPA money for 250 hours of training and hopes to get permanent employment there after that. Although most students in the program take a bus, this student has his own car which he uses to get to work and school. He likes the small size of the program and is making personal friends ... with whom he socializes on weekends. He is also learning from watching others in the program and he now helps other students to use the computer to prepare a resume. The things he likes best about the program are the chance to get a job and the instructor's help in developing his job interviewing skills. A concern he has about the program is that some of his friends in it, he feels, are ready for job placement but the instructor is overloaded with work and hasn't time to place some of the students yet.

Other aspects of the project also appeared vibrant and on-target in Owens' February progress report.

I will describe Owens' final report later in the section titled "Evaluation as Technical Assistance." In the remainder of this section I wish to point out and comment on evaluative judgments in Owens' final report. It included evaluative comments from John Harp, some employers, and a ˆ w students, but almost nothing summarizing perceptions of quality as seen by Tom Owens himself, the evaluator. The following were the exceptions:

> Establishment of close working relationships among the various agencies serving special needs youth was a major objective of the p.oject and one where the co-directors at Organizational Architects, Inc., did an excellent job. I attended several of the inte agency monthly meetings and found them to be well organized and useful. The monthly agency contact logs kept by the project staff indicate particularly frequent contact with the Grays Harbor Pupil Service Coop, the Advocates, and with cooperating employers. Also, monthly contacts were made with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Labor and Industries, the local high schools, and parents of students. Early referrals of youth while

> still in high school was one area that did not get adequately developed in the project.
>
> Collaboration [with the private sector] was excellent. The project had training slots it couldn't fill. This is especially surprising in a community with high unemployment.
>
> [As to making] the project to be fully transitional, it needs to identify and select handicapped students needing employment assistance while they are still in high school.

The scarcity of evaluative statements was attributable, I think, to the fact that Owens got fewer data on the late spring students than he wanted, and saw interest in the Project waning. Perhaps he no longer felt fully inclined to close out the study with summary statements of effectiveness and impact.

In interviews with me he was rather expansive and in general favorably impressed. Here are some of those judgmental observations:

> ... The types of jobs they are getting for the people seem really good to me. These are not "dead end" jobs. When you deal with special needs populations it's a challenge to get them jobs having real potential.
>
> ... The proposal called for them to be working very closely with school districts, to have contact with student even at 9th and 10th grade levels so there would be continuity in transition into this program. That seems to have fallen by the wayside. It is not getting much attention at all.
>
> ... If the Community College would pick up John Harp's part of the program there is ɔd possibility you could divide the rest of the program among the institutions now participating. They could keep the thing going. There could be life after federal funding. If anyone could do it well it would be Mike and Carol. They have the vision. They can pull together things like that.
>
> ... I don't see them interested in generalizability. If they get a new project funded, which is equivalent to the continuation of this one, then they would be interested in it.

Owens was sensitive to a number of the major evaluative issues identified in the next section, but chose not to report on them formally. For one reason, his data pool was shallow. And issue development was not required by his formal contract, nor paid for. he did not orient as much to the vitality

and generalizability of the enterprise as an outsider would expect. His orientation was local, his information was gathered to assist Taylor and Richardson. In the long and short of it, his was a project-based study, not a federal-program-based study--though he was careful to equip the Project to satisfy its federal requirements.

Research on Evaluation

During the fall of 1986, with help from my Transition Institute colleague, Lizanne DeStefano, I selected the Grays Harbor Transition Project as a case study for examining several key evaluation issues. We reviewed 140 proposals and selected three sites, the others at Danville, IL and Santa Barbara, CA. The Illinois and California sites were chosen partly for researcher ease-of-access. Projects to be studied were selected that

1. had immediate contact with students;
2. utilized a variety of community work placements; and
3. involved schools, state agencies, community, and private sectors;

but as a group gave us

4. geographical spread;
5. experience with a variety of handicap conditions; and
6. a variety of contextual issues.

In selecting each of the cases we kept in mind a number of issues our team identified last year as needing study. (See Issues in Research on Evaluation in Transition which I edited for the University of Illinois Transition Institute). These issues are identified in the next section. The Grays Harbor Project was attractive because it brought in (a) private sector coordinators who were not previously experienced in special education; (b) an economically depressed community with high unemployment; and (c) an outside evaluator whose previous work was known to be of high quality.

At the November 1986 Annual Meeting I approached Taylor and Owens and found them willing to consider participation in the case study. Knowing that progress in the Grays Harbor Project had been disappointingly slow, Mike Taylor was reluctant to increase its complexity, but he foresaw that my case study might facilitate documenting the project for distant readers. The arrangement was confirmed later after I spelled out my needs and Taylor and Owens had had a chance to discuss it with Carol Richardson. I pointed out that I did not intend to evaluate the Project and that I would be more attentive to its evaluation activity than to its transition activity.

I visited the Grays Harbor area for several days in March. I observed John Harp's class and an interagency meeting, met several of the students, visited several worksites and talked with supervisors, and interviewed administrators at the Cooperative, the Community College, and a rural school. I discussed the effort and the issues at length with Richardson and Taylor and separately with Owens. In August, after Project completion, I returned, intending to learn of reactions to the final report, but found it only in draft form and not yet seen by interested parties in the county. I interviewed Richardson, Taylor, and Owens about project termination and College plans to continue the transition services

Not a special education researcher, I was unfamiliar with some of the program issues. I identified what I considered to be key programmatic problems, but concentrated on what I considered to be key evaluation problems. I frequently relied on Owens, the project co-directors, and DeStefano to correct my interpretations of the transition effort. Some misperceptions probably remain in this account. Even though the primary purpose here was to increase understanding of the role of program evaluation with transition projects, a correct and thorough understanding of the program was needed. The program issues I conceptualized are presented in the sections to follow, after a discussion of the evaluation issues.

The Issues

Many who study quality in education find it useful to distinguish between program issues and evaluation issues. Issues are major ideas about which people disagree. People will disagree about how the program is operating and how it should be evaluated. The co-directors of the Grays Harbor Transition Program and their outside evaluator identified both kinds of issues. In my case study here I was trying to examine evaluation issues, so I will take them up first.

Evaluation Issues

What questions will best organize our thinking and lead to greater understanding of the role of evaluation at the Grays Harbor site? Four major clusters of questions became prominent. After presenting these issue questions I will discuss each cluster with detailed reference to evaluating the transition work at this site.

1. Overpromising. What is a reasonable time period for building a base in the community and developing such a model? Unexpectedly slow progress in Grays Harbor early on was voiced as one reason for less than full interagency cooperation later. Should disappointing accomplishment the first year be chalked up to faulty operation or to excusable overoptimism? Is this an instance of the general tendency of those who request funding to make proposal claims and plans which overpromise what can be accomplished? Do the directors, sporting high ambition, direct work away from modest accomplishment toward the unattainable?

2. Criteria of Success. Should job placement be the primary criterion for program success? Is duration of employment just as important? At Grays Harbor we saw concentration on basic skills training, though the proposal emphasized employment criteria. On what standards

should the evaluator focus? Do absolute standards (here, assurance of eighth grade skill levels) or relative standards (a gain for each trainee) serve quality control equally well?

3. Technical Assistance. Did the external evaluator effectively balance evaluation as technical assistance and evaluation as guarantor of accountability? Did the assistance role nullify the obligation to identify shortcomings? Did the evaluator increase project dependence on outside help or assist the staff in becoming self-reliant? What is the proper role of evaluation reports in application for contribution or new federal funding of transition projects?

4. Generalizability. Did the Project co-directors use their opportunity well to create a model and leave a record potentially useful to other special education transition service personnel? The extensive evaluation commitments set forth in the Project proposal were far from fully covered in the evaluator's final report. The evaluator complied with the provisions of his contract. As of November 1, 1987, the Project staff had not submitted a report indicating--among many things--the generalizability of their approach, but continued to prepare one. Will that report serve the desire of OSERS to identify generalizable models?

***

Other evaluators (or meta-evaluators) would of course have identified a different array of issues, at least in part. After reviewing our Transition Institute work of the first year, we selected this site and I traveled to Aberdeen expecting to investigate certain issues. Seven had been identified by our Institute Task Group and (as mentioned earlier) had been presented in our 1986 report, Issues in Research on Evaluation in Transition. The seven:

1. Discrepancies between federal expectations and local capabilities,
2. Special characteristics of "transition" that affect evaluation,
3. Inattention of evaluators to broad societal values,
4. Inattention to professional standards set forth by evaluators,
5. Inattention of evaluators to epistemic elements in evaluation,
6. Flexibility of evaluation designs, and
7. Regard of situational context in designing the evaluation.

Given our work the year before, the first three Grays Harbor evaluation issues - overpromising, criteria of success, and technical assistance - were perhaps predicted on discrepancies between the values and standards of various stakeholders, particularly federal sponsors and local agencies. The fourth issue, generalizability, included and extended our attention last year to situational context in the collection and analysis of evaluation data. More now on the four evaluation issues I studied at Grays Harbor.

Overpromising. As indicated earlier and as reproduced above, the proposal drafted by Richardson and Taylor to obtain OSERS funding promised extensive program evaluation and validation. Their transition services model was to be thoroughly examined and validated. And indeed, work was frequently and conscientiously reviewed by the co-directors and their collaborators, and by the outside evaluator as well. My own inquiry increased evaluative attentions by the staff and local sponsors. More than an ordinary self-scrutiny occurred. The proportionate share of total work spent in formal and informal evaluation was large.

And yet very little quality assurance or validation was documented. The promised "life story" of the Project has not, at least to date, been written. It would not stretch the truth to say that the impact of the project remained undocumented. If the comparison of alternative organiza-

tional strategies occurred (as promised in the proposal), the results were not made available to potential model-users. In the closing months major participants in Grays Harbor disagreed about the quality of the collaborative effort. Comments remained largely off the record, some too painful for public expression. Evidence that the model "worked" was not documented. It was not simply a failure to comply; the proposers promised much more evaluative assurance than their resources could have delivered.

The proposers promised to work with nine districts and 30 students. They did. The major goal of the program was to

> Develop a model that will provide effective planning and program development to meet the service and employment needs of handicapped individuals as they leave school.

They did develop such a model. They did correctly see their task as one of model building. They recognized that the model needed validation, but did not assign or reserve resources for carrying out a validation study. According to Owens, in writing the proposal (and therefore in promising to validate the model) Taylor and Richardson were conceptualizing a three-year project. After receiving funding for two years, they could have indicated a reduction in the validation expectation--but did not. When I interviewed them with less than half a year to go, they appeared to feel that a smoothly running project transferred to ongoing institutional control would constitute a validation.

Almost a year and a half passed before the first students were being trained. Outside evaluator Tom Owens did not identify this as a failing, but Pupil Services Cooperative Director Harry Carthum did. Were the services tardy? Individual observers did not agree. Proposal timelines were not precise (and should not have been), but much emphasis within the proposal was given to the time-consuming business of validation. Proposal

readers and evaluators could reasonably expect student enrollment during Year 1. Taylor was convinced that the pace of the Project was outside his control--they were pushing ahead in as many ways as they knew how. He felt they deserved credit for overcoming enormous inertia. But overcoming inertia was not a federally recognized criterion of success. And the proposers had not indicated that building a base of agency cooperation would be difficult.

Criteria of Success. Richardson and Taylor based some of their thinking about validation on the fact that even for model-building projects, federal orientation to project success was directly keyed to job placement. They spoke of having their model win endorsement of the National Diffusion Network. They did not doubt that almost everything they did related to preparing youngsters for work, helping them get acquainted with work, and increasing likelihood they would remain at work. But the co-directors doubted that the quality of what they did in identifying needy youth, arranging agency cooperation, and helping youngsters deal with a panoply of obstacles would be highly correlated with percentage of youth placed. They had more than one objective to pursue.

We all know that many factors determine job placement. Taylor and Richardson knew they could be distracted from their service and educational obligations if they concentrated on placement. They recognized multiple criteria by which project success should be based--and resented the oversimplification of having any single indicator represent success. Job placement was seen to be not as important as federal rhetoric indicated. Overcoming inertia, for example, was also important. And reasonable people in different responsibilities disagree about how important each is.

Federal support was provided and received under a contract to produce a model service arrangement for handicapped youth. To be successful in federal eyes, to satisfy the contract, the Grays Harbor Transition Project needed to establish a smooth and durable collaboration among agencies, to place into employment a substantial number of youngsters, and to demonstrate that the arrangement would work elsewhere. Most of the time the Project staff was concentrating on more immediate goals.

For evaluation theorists the general question is one of honoring different, even sometimes contradictory, criteria and standards held by different constituencies. Here, the federal sponsor and the local operators had different views of how much should be accomplished. The proposal was a poor guide, it lacked specificity and credulity. As is the practice. Neither local nor federal people treat proposal statements as contractual. Hyperbole is expected. The document is intended to win funding, not to present realities, not to state a final set of expectations.

Most designers of evaluation models, working along such lines as the <u>Joint Standards for Evaluating Programs, Materials and Instruction</u>, propose ways of negotiating initial expectations. A few evaluators employ what Malcolm Parlett and David Hamilton called "progressive focussing" or emergent designs. Even with sophisticated designs, negotiated and emergent, the problems of conflicting criteria and standards do not go away. It could be that the present situation, one of taking specification within proposals and evaluation obligations only half seriously, is optimal. What is clearly needed is a better process for revising expectations along the way.

<u>Evaluation as Technical Assistance</u>. After a year of little progress, seeing little help from the University of Illinois Transition Institute, the Project co-directors chose to employ an external evaluation specialist.

They selected Tom Owens. They recognized they did not have the expertise themselves to carry out their validation commitments. They had promised validation because the RFP called for evaluation and because they believed a model should be validated. But the main reason they selected Owens was because they were confident he could help them carry out their immediate management responsibilities. Whether or not they objected to the evaluator Harry Carthum wanted did not become clear. They had worked with Owens previously and found him knowledgeable, ingenious, and easy to work with. From him they expected technical assistance.

In Owens's words, "Evaluation and technical assistance go hand in hand." He offered both. He recognized lack of expertise within Organizational Architects, Inc., but a willingness to learn. Far less than what was needed could be done. It was only a $5,000 subcontract, so it was not highly important to the Northwest Lab, but it fit nicely into the Lab's and Owens's own service mission. Owens wanted to help. He wanted the Project to succeed, and he wanted to write a credible and useful evaluation report. He calculated that for $5,000 he could commit perhaps 20 days of work, most at his office in Portland but perhaps four or five in Aberdeen. He could spend little time gathering data himself. He would rely mostly on the Project staff to obtain what he needed. He foresaw the paperwork; an evaluation plan, a progress report or two--each consuming perhaps a couple of days; and a final report, perhaps taking four. He would keep in touch by phone, analyze the data provided, and give Carol and Mike whatever advice he could.

Even though the co-directors knew they eventually needed "summative" data on outcomes, Owens's orientation and theirs was for "formative" evaluation. They wanted to be guided along the way by his observations. He provided a 63-page "instruments package" in mid-October, then revised it a

month later. For his 14 evaluation questions Owens indicated the record forms and tested that could be used. Richardson and Taylor adopted many of the f rms, but urged him to devote attention to development of the model, not just to measuring student readiness for employment. They pared down the testing to "pre and post" administration of the Test of Adult Basic Skills.

Owens's final report was a 17-page single-spaced document. Designed around 12 of the 14 instrument-package questions, it provided a descriptive and interpretive overview of the project. He described interagency activity and participant characteristics, noting that participating students referred by the College had consistently lower basic skills gains than students referred by other agencies. The answers to the 12 questions were based largely on staff interviews made several months before project termination. The report was submitted several weeks after project termination. Taylor and Richardson gave it close attention, but others apparently did not see it.

What Owens provided through his evaluation subcontract was reasonable in three ways: the kind of help he provided, the amount of work he did, and his direct and indirect reflections on the merits of project accomplishment. He offered formative evaluation more than summative evaluation, helping the co-directors examine the issues they faced. Even though he produced little information and rather limited interpretation of data provided him, Owens devoted as much time and as much professional scrutiny as $5,000 buys from the information services industry. He did not really provide an assessment of impact and worth of t e transition services in Grays Harbor, nor of the quality of the model, but he made it possible for a careful reader to see difficulties faced and overcome and the extent to which local youth with handicaps were assisted in gaining employment. He provided pretty much what the staff needed and could pay for.

Owens fulfilled his contract. Together with Richardson and Taylor he defined his role more as technical consultant than accountability auditor to policy research. He served his immediate employers well. How well he served the Grays Harbor community and the American society is not clear. He did not study issues from the point of view of the collaborating agencies and institutions. Informally he shared his concern about issues most pertinent to American education and the workplace, issues raised in broad sweep by OSERS evaluation requirements. But he did not evaluate the Project in those terms. Whether he should have is not clear. Technical assistance may be the proper emphasis for such an evaluation subcontract. More study of what each of an evaluator's options accomplishes is needed.

Generalizability of Model Programs. Tom Owens did not provide what the original proposal called for in the way of validation of the transition model. No evaluator could have, whatever the subcontract size. For $50,000 or $100,000 Owens could have studied the validation issues raised and gathered pertinent data, but the degree to which this model would be appropriate for adoption across the country still would not be known. That becomes known only when a model is tried out in a variety of circumstances under close watch. The reality even then is that local staff members will immediately adapt the model, influencing and extending it so that the original model survives only in part.

Long after the project terminated Mike Taylor talked about writing its story in a way that would be useful to others interested in the model. November arrived, the report was said to be nearly written. A good final report would be useful. But even if Taylor were to tell the story effectively, it would not, and could not, be a validation of the model for use elsewhere.

The Organizational Architects, Inc. people did not keep their proposal's promises to validate the model. A serious matter? Perhaps. The proposal becomes the legal contract and a basis for evaluating success, but does not reflect subsequent revision of purpose, schedule, and funding. It was unclear from this proposal whether validation was part of a two-year plan or three. Governments and other sponsors seem to have little way of dealing with unrealistic proposals. Here the promise was to provide understanding--and little (to date) has been provided. Apparently no one in Washington, D.C. was distraught because the Grays Harbor transition model and what had been learned disappeared in the mist.

Who is to blame? The work of the federal bureaucrat is to translate legislation into regulation and opportunity, to keep programs running, not to learn from them. Others are to learn, but who are they? We have clearing houses and research laboratories, repositories of learning. The records may get filed, but seldom retrieved. Neither theorists nor practitioners are avid gleaners of vicarious experience. Few believe the models created by federal services-delivery projects are worth examining. Some are, but almost no one can learn a small project's important complexities. The system for identifying which cases should be paid attention to is extremely weak. Professional expectation is low. If prob ems or effects can be aggregated, then the tally may be entered in some matrix. If a story can be promulgated simply, such as through the National Diffusion Network, then it may be. But the applied research system is not working. Still, many Mike Taylors are optimistic.

As things stand, the burden of learning belongs to the next generation of project directors. These persons too have little time to search for models. But more important, in these times they have little expectation of

needing them or learning from them. The models that appeal to them are combinations of own experience and ingenuity. New directors occasionally will study what others have done, but somehow they know that for anyone to understand the nuances of a model in a way that will circumvent obstacle and increase success requires a worthy model in the first place and an expert record keeper.

Individual models will generalize some, but not as much as the name "model" suggests. How extensive the generalizability probably varies with many characteristics of professional staff, community, and student body. Often the most to be expected from an outstanding model is suggestion. How the evaluator should examine a model to determine its suggestive properties, its possible uses to diverse users, is not well understood.

In midspring, 1987, chatting in a conference room in Olympia, I asked Tom Owens a question, one I considered the $64,000 question: "Does Grays Harbor really have a <u>model</u> program?" He said:

> Well, it's a unique effort. It is business people getting a school district, a community college, and an advocacy group working together on transition. And it's doing it well now, working against barriers common in many communities. Using JTPA funding they have placed 13 students on jobs in the community and they hope to get another bunch working in April. But the real push is to keep the training [at the community college] and support [from a parents' advocacy group] working, working hand in hand, after OSERS funding runs out.

Transition Project Issues

<u>The Evaluator's Questions</u>. The conceptual ground underlying Tom Owens's evaluation study was established by the questions he presented in the Instruments Package dated November 13, 1986. As I indicated earlier, the co-directors had called for an extensive evaluation and validation perspective. Owens outlined a modest package of observations and

measurements. The facets of the Project which Owens felt important for immediate evaluation are illustrated by the following 14 (paraphrased) questions:

1. What major past problems have kept youth with handicaps from successful transition to employment and further education?
2. What are the trainee characteristics of the young people in this project?
3. How does the Project staff identify unique needs in each participant and develop an individualized action plan?
4. How did participants hear about the Project and what were their reasons for joining?
5. What program strategies are used to increase participants' basic skills and employment and training options?
6. Do students make a significant gain in basic skills?
7. Do students achieve adequate employability skills?
8. Are training and employment related to study interests and abilities?
9. Do students eventually make a positive transition?
10. How effective is the interagency collaboration in meeting the needs of participants?
11. What attitudes toward the project are held by participants, parents, employers, and staff?
12. How effective was the private sector involvement in the training and employment of individuals with handicaps?
13. In what ways can Project improvement occur?
14. Was the Project's Transition Model developed suitably for adoption and adaptation?

Owens raised the basic questions expected by OSERS. He spoke of his own strong interest in issue questions #6, #10, and #12. As with most evaluators with psychology or special education backgrounds he was particularly interested in characteristics of the students. During the year he became attentive to several additional issues:

15. What is the quality of jobs they get?
16. From what referral sources do the good trainees come?
17. Which trainees gain most in basic skills?
18. How much communication is there among the agencies?
19. What are the pros and cons of a college as the training site?
20. What responsibility does the high school have during the year or so after the special education student leaves?

Though all 20 of Owens's questions are important, they did not direct attention to what turned out to be the shortfall in transition processes at Grays Harbor. The Project encountered serious difficulty with interagency cooperation, with trainee misbehavior at work site, and with transfer of transition responsibilities to the agencies. Informally, the evaluator considered these matters but did not give focus to them nor speak of them in the formal evaluation report. Though chosen partly because of his flexibility, Tom Owens stuck to his original issues.

Program Issues Deserving Research. When the Grays Harbor Transition Project is looked at from a policy-research perspective, a set of issues somewhat different from Owens's set emerges. Entering with a frame of reference shaped by the Illinois Transition Institute's seven evaluation-theory questions (described earlier in "Evaluation Issues"), I found the following program issues to be pertinent in the Grays Harbor Project.

1. Were relationships among participating agencies good? Was co-director confidence in these relationships misplaced? Was the Project less effective because the Pupil Services Cooperative prevented access to youngsters still in high school? Was there resentment against the large funding granted to a recently created for-profit agency? Did this agency effectively vanish, leaving a well-functioning program to be run by existing institutions?
2. Is the Project a redundancy, repeating services already provided by existing agencies? Is job preparation the key need of the targeted students? How much emphasis should be put on increasing students' ability to get their own jobs? To what extent is general vocational preparation useful to all? Do these young people need more of what can be offered by special education specialists?
3. Were the right students served? Were native Americans and certain others greatly in need of transition services those least likely to get help? In working primarily with referrals, was the Project helping only those easiest to help?
4. Did the co-directors work effectively at building a generalizable model? Was program generalizability diminished because employment placements relied heavily on a co-director's social network?
5. In lowering its entrance requirements and downscaling instructional offerings to serve these needy youngsters did the Community College in any way jeopardize the quality of its established offerings? Did the alliance help make the College less attractive to local youngsters than it had been and thwart community efforts to keep them at home?
6. Observed were a strike of grocery store workers, changes in state definitions of welfare, and other economic developments locally. Were these contextual factors needing programmatic attention by the Project?

As a researcher studying the evaluation work at Grays Harbor, I made a few tries to relate those six program issues to evaluation. Relationships among the participating agencies were typical, much like what we find in other communities. Any agency anywhere is busy, with little resource for doing more; is somewhat suspicious when a new program nudges into its territory; and is resentful of implications that existing services are not what they should be. Interagency facilitation deserved to be a major criterion of success. Here, special educators admired neither the Project's administrative prowess nor its training orientation and did not allow Project interaction with students still in high school--yet special educator Dave Sander worked diligently to make the Project a success. The visitor here could still hear words of disbelief that Organizational Architects, Inc. was funded rather than existing agencies, more because of its lack of track record than because it represented the private sector.

In many eyes, the Project was a redundancy. Yet that was not an evaluation issue. Many local youth with handicaps were not being helped by existing agencies, and with a new nexus, additional youth were served. But many people supposed that had the money been available to existing agencies, the same or better services would have occurred. When the Project closed, the community college bowed out; also, an existing JTPA contractor continued to provide entry employment assistance. Many of the students had previously had years of basic skills remedial training and some job preparation. It remained unclear that a new institutional configuration was needed. Still, transition needs were real. Young people's attitudes toward training and employment do change, and a number of those served here appeared to make good use of the opportunity. With little arrangement for person-specific training before the trainee reached the worksite, the educational

contribution here appeared modest, yet Project attention to youth needs appeared not redundant. All this deserved evaluator review.

The Project co-directors recognized their commitment to model building. To them that meant setting up the best interagency collaboration, providing the best training, and arranging good work opportunities--and then letting others know how the obstacles have been overcome. They did not approach the problem of learning what the limits of acceptance would be, under what conditions would something work or not work. Their choice was probably wise, for they had even less competence to validate their model than competence to create it. They built a workable model, of questionable durability, of unknown generalizability. As their evaluator pointed out, what they did well was to get several agencies to provide good transition services to youth who needed it. Should evaluation expect more?

Of the foregoing issues, how many should Tom Owens have addressed? It's a matter to be negotiated, but ultimately it is his choice to make. Beyond the routine how-much and how-often and how-good questions, the evaluation specialist faces a large choice of issue questions. Many issues must be ignored. Never is the evaluation complete. Evaluators have neither the time nor the talent to go beyond a modest inquiry. Some evaluators do not address any important issues. Owens did not violate the norm. He fulfilled his contract, working harder at helping the staff understand their situation than attesting to their accountability. Neither Richardson and Taylor's way nor Owens's way seems the way toward breakthroughs in transition services, but it _was_ a way to serve needy young adults in a needy community.

What are reasonable expectations of evaluation? Not broad generalization about what works! As Lee Cronbach, Egon Guba, and Carol Weiss have concluded, DeStefano and I also have concluded that an aggregate

of local project evaluations will neither determine the success of the national effort nor the reasons why what happened happened. Evaluation budgets are too small to support the best inquiry we could do, but even our best efforts seldom answer the most important questions. From project to project, dissimilarities among aims, tactics, and settings defy efforts to generalize. Other than contributing to the census of what has occurred when and where, federal questions are seldom answered by project-based evaluation. Such was the case in Grays Harbor.

Evaluation plays another role. Evaluation requirements tell professionals about the expectations of government agencies, and thus indirectly, the expectations of the people. For example, by emphasizing job placement criteria, an economic frame of reference is established. By requiring standardized data, the staff's self-serving anecdotes become less tenable. Obviously there are more direct ways of stating national goals and preferred styles, but the obligation to evaluate is one of the ordinary ways.

But the real service of formal evaluation requirements is in enhancing inquiry undertaken by local stakeholders, particularly the project staff. It appears that the more conscientious educators, those already busy reviewing project quality, are the ones who can be helped most. Whether long experienced in special education, as was Harry Carthum here, or little, as were, at the outset, Carol Richardson and Mike Taylor, directors find that good evaluation requirements prod and guide self-study. Yet requirements can be misdirecting and enervating. Specifying objectives, for example, is useful to a point, but a drain on work if always on the agenda and a straight jacket if overly heeded.

Whether stated in application procedures, provided through technical assistance, or generated by outside consultants, evaluation requirements can

be powerful facilitators of good project management. Too little meta-evaluation research has been done to demonstrate which kinds of requirements strengthen projects and which kinds weaken. In this project, evaluation requirements did not appear to contribute positively to the first year's organizational efforts. These did not facilitate interagency planning nor resolve differences in perspective of transition services needed. Could a different set of OSERS evaluation requirements done so?

When outside evaluator Tom Owens was brought in, he targeted formative aims more than summative. He (a) helped establish a management information system, and (b) moved toward the co-directors' dissemination aims (which ultimately were not pursued). His aims exceeded OSERS requirements, but fell short of "model" validation. Owens's interpretation of requirements facilitated getting ordinary work done and keeping records most likely to be needed. Informally he encouraged inquiry into fundamental transition issues, many of which Taylor and Richardson already were discussing. Owens could have done more, but what he did fit the size and content of his subcontract. Concentration on federal needs may someday hance pursuit of fundamental generalizations. But we know not how.

Evaluation played both formal and informal roles in the Grays Harbor Transition Project. The formal requirements set up by the original RFP lacked specification but allowed essential local adaptations. The formal requirements set forth through technical assistance from the Transition Institute helped establish traditional management routines, orienting more to compliance than elucidation. Commitments to validation set forth in the Project proposal posed unrealistic obligations, but these were largely ignored by everyone. The outside evaluator set forth formal evaluation requirements which further operationalized management routines <u>and</u>

informal evaluation requirements which supported thoughtful review of what was happening. All in all, a nice balance between asking too much and too little. Still, in its #1 aim, model building, the Project fell short of expectation. Better evaluation requirements possibly could have made a difference. Probably not, but possibly.

Evaluation Notes from the Santa Barbara, California Transition Services Project

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Fieldwork

I lived in the Santa Barbara area for about 12 weeks during the fall of 1986. The data from which this story was derived were gathered during a five-week period within my stay. More often than not I would have a single interview on a given day and usually have about five per week. In this unintentionally leisurely manner, about six to seven "full" days were devoted to field interviewing.

It can be frustrating work when after a week of waiting one meets a highly recommended informant only to find that what you came for is only a shell--a husk of meaning. But fortune smiles too, when a boilerplate interviewee proves full of life. A few would use my presence to chop off more heads than Alice's queen, and others would bask me in the saccharine shades of their spreading apathy. But I truly loved them all: they are all a part of this story. We share common goals: to achieve immortality; to make it home each night.

From a list of over 40 potential interviewees created by the director and assistant director a core group of 16 were selected. Two refused. Seven additional area people not on the original list were added as a result of recommendations or leads provided by the interviewees. Scheduling of interviews proved difficult. (One person was rescheduled four times.) Often it took two weeks to get an appointment. Travel time to the interviewee was a major cost.

In sum, 30 people were interviewed: three project administrators, five teachers, three parents, two students, six agency representatives, two business persons, two university professors, two project consultants, and five state department special education specialists. Some of the interviewees provided multiple perspectives of the project; for example, one person was a parent of a severely handicapped 19-year-old, a parent trainer, and a professional educator.

Most of the interviews lasted about 45 minutes. A few ran an hour and a half. None was tape recorded. Everyone was given the opportunity to add to or retract their comments by phone after the interview. (Two people added considerably to original observations.) One obvious shortcoming of this field report is its coverage of business/industry participation in the project. I shall comment on this later.

My fieldwork coincided with crucial events in the life of the project: for example, the last two months of the project's funding. No re-funding was in sight. And tragically, the spouse of the project director passed on after a lengthy illness. I was given free reign throughout my stay. I began by reading two project documents and learned that after the first six months of the two-year project, four action components were settled on as strategic efforts to be made.

<u>The Four Strategic Tasks of the Santa Barbara Project</u>

1. A <u>Transition Cooperative</u> was to be organized to assist the project in meeting its objectives. The <u>Transition Cooperative</u> would be designed to allow the key (28) agency stakeholders opportunities to facilitate transition of special education students into the adult community. Collaboratively its members would work to overcome the problems identified above and serve as an advisory body to the project.

2. An Employability Curriculum Committee was to be formed within the school system to prepare special education students for postsecondary educational opportunities or employment or both.

3. An Individual Transition Plan was to be written for each special education student prior to leaving school, for example, graduation from high school. This plan would be formulated with the assistance of appropriate adult service providers in the community and would include assessment information useful to those agencies and the individual and his family, recommendations for continued instruction, information about specific skill areas still needing development, and resources available in the community to meet the goals collaboratively identified by the individual, the family, the school system, and probable future providers of service. Support services that were not presently available in the community and that were critical to the successful transition of the individual were to be developed.

4. A Transition Support Group, composed primarily of parents, was to be established to provide support and training to parents of youngsters either preparing for or in the midst of accomplishing the transition from school to adult life. A group of volunteers would be recruited and trained to assist individuals with special needs in successfully adapting to work situations by providing coaching and counseling individuals on initial job placements.

The successes of this project for the most part built on good efforts and good people known to project leaders. "We went with the winners. We only had two years. We had some luck, but the major successes were not luck, nor a surprise. We knew where the good people were. This project permitted us to get them together."

Before turning to the three principal parts of the story of the Santa Barbara Transition Project (parents, transition, and evaluation), a note on the state investment in special education may aid the reader unfamiliar with California's educational scene.

Special Education in California

Special education is big business in California. At the bureaucratic top is the State Board of Education's 17-member Advisory Committee on Special Education. Annually it schedules nine two-day meetings throughout the state. An Associate Superintendent directs a state program serving 378,738 California children with special needs, a majority of whom (212,097) had a specific learning disability. Some 5,554 students were multihandicapped, 3,280 deaf, 26,805 mentally retarded, 7,289 orthopedically impaired, and 160 deaf blind. Special classes and centers serve 118,432 and resource specialist programs are provided for another 146,319. A small number attend state special schools (1,013).

California public school personnel who provide services to special education students number 18,142. About 50 percent teach (9,561) in special classes; another 30 percent (5,255) are resource specialists.

Entitlement funds for instructional programs further confirm the big-business image of California special education: $835 million from the state general fund are augmented by $271 million from the state school fund, $166 million from local school general funds, and $82 million from federal flow through. County property taxes contribute another $84 million. Still other revenue sources contribute further to a whopping $1.6 billion annual budget for special education in California.[1]

[1] "Special Education in California." California State Department of Education. Bill Honig, Superintendent. Sacramento 1986.

The $1.6 billion is about 12 percent of the total budget for public education (K-12) in the state. About 10 percent of the total instructional personnel and 9 percent of the students are in special education. In some way or another about every tenth educator, student, and dollar is a part of the California special education scene. In California, after one is 22 years old one is no longer entitled to school services. Heretofore this has meant the SH (severely handicapped) young adult was placed principally in sheltered workshops or remained at home. More recently, options have included community integrated employment situations with the possibility of group home living.

State commitments to serving kids with special needs are paralleled in the Santa Barbara School District. It provides a full range of services. Much of that effort will not be reflected in this report.

Evaluative Remarks about the Project

This is not an evaluation of Santa Barbara's Transition Project. Nor is it a description of that project, nor a study of the project's leadership, efforts, and achievements. It is the residue of what 30 interviewees caused me to think about when they talked about their view of the Santa Barbara project or their view of transition projects. From time to time, I would interject an evaluative question, probe for a value, try out an idea provided by another interviewee.

The interviewees presumably had their minds on what they cared to tell me about transition. I tried to keep my mind on what their words implied for evaluating transition. It was an interesting tug of war. Sometimes we dropped the rope and thought together about a shared notion. More often we engaged in parallel play.

I am grateful for the carte blanche given me by the Santa Barbara project leadership and for the generosity of my informants. They gave me time, ideas, stories and--when the gods smiled--an education.

There may be ideas worth developing that I failed to recognize on those pads of yellow lined pages consumed during interviews. And, the ones that follow herein may be inadequately developed. C'est la vie. I believe the apparent shortcomings of my site visit and subsequent interpretation are outweighed by the evaluation issues that the Santa Barbara project helped me consider. In the final analysis, the Santa Barbara project did not need an evaluation from me as much as I needed evaluative ideas from the Santa Barbara project.

When one hears criticism of project purpose, development, or outcomes based on personal dislike of a project participant, it is pretty thin stuff. So it was with most of the critical comments about the Santa Barbara project. For the most part, the project was seen as having delivered on its promises. The meetings were held; the curriculum was developed; the ITP's were being written (one prototype was on the computer); the present training prototype was created; a process for improving interagency agreements has been initiated. Other project outcomes could be noted. School district participants were uniformly enthusiastic about their experiences. They were enthused about project related services, activities, and products, for example, "This project has been the best thing that's happened to me as a teacher in five years in the district."

Participants from other agencies, and peripheral informants (people who had not participated--but had knowledge about the project) were less

enthusiastic, less generous in their evaluation of the project's process, products, and future. Most concerns were with what the project did not do, with the small number of student placements, with the slow progress of business/ industry involvement, and with the lack of genuine participation of a particular key agency representative. Note the concern with the sins of omission -- not commission. Many felt the project was too short. "It takes five years to <u>start</u> a project like this. Two years is only fooling around."

In my exit interview with project directors, I was told of hopes of having enlarged participant understanding of facilitating change, of pinpointing success variables, and of developing strategies for change. These were not my foci. I talked with people about how they viewed evaluation, how they evaluated, how evaluation had affected their lives in this project and elsewhere, and about what the project had meant to them. Three large themes emerged: (1) parents, (2) transition, and (3) evaluation.

If what follows is useful to readers interested in educational change strategies, it will be a pleasant surprise to the writer, who knows little of such matters. If what follows does not raise concern with those interested in educational evaluation, I shall be distressed. The shock waves I felt in Santa Barbara are still with me three months after my departure. I shall continue with a comment on context.

CONTEXT

"Every morning I wake up to start another ho-hum day in paradise."

(Receptionist, Tri-county Regional Center)

The Santa Barbara project first seemed to be indistinguishable from the many school district projects I have reviewed over the years. Lovely little town, Santa Barbara, with 78,000 or so residents to enjoy its many advantages. The climate is kind to its street people, who number in the hundreds, as well as to its annual $320 million agribusiness industry.

Four privately maintained museums augment the University of California campus's contribution to the arts. The city has its symphony orchestra and over 20 music organizations which either present performances or sponsor music events.

The transition "coop" is also an elegant operation. It has its able, take-charge politically smooth administrator, its competent, get-things-done second-line administrator, plus a cast of sophisticated characters who contributed to my story.

Throughout my interviews, project innovations were brought forward with surety to enable me to see their uniqueness as well as their functional merit. Tales were told about the key contributions of this person or that. The party line (about the nature of this two-year effort) started to emerge after the second interview. "Kids drop off the cliff when they leave schooling." And, "Once into adult day programs, they never get out." And, "We have only begun--but there is no turning back now." And, "Parent involvement is the key. They change the whole nature

of an educational project when they are true partners." And, "The involvement of corporate stakeholder is the central and most unusual dimension of our transition efforts." And, "It's the way we do our work from the bottom up, not the top down that makes this one different." These were themes spoken often, believed deeply, and left unchallenged.

If an outside evaluator were to scrutinize only the context of the aforementioned themes (short-term and long-term goals distinction, parent and industry involvement, and process management), a fascinating but incomplete story of the success of this project could be detailed.

For example, it is unlikely that a native midwestern professor (or a D.C. bureaucrat) could easily understand a key dimension of Santa Barbara context, one that no one mentioned per se during interviews about the project. It had something to do with 987 sunshiny days from August 26 to December 9, 1986. It has something to do with the pacific Pacific ocean. My first hint came when an interviewee told me to "loosen my tie, get tinted glasses and schedule my interviews at Moby Dick's." I loosened my tie. My second hint came when a banker talked about her career. We'll get to career after a few words about the Pacific.

Santa Barbara's history is filled with incidents that link with the sea. The first European to set foot on the Californian Coast was a Portugese navigator, who apparently did so on December 4, 1542, the feast day of Saint Barbara. Earthquakes and sailors have left their mark on her ever since Richard Henry Dana wrote about Santa Barbara in his novel Two Years Before the Mast. So later did Charles Norduff in Mutiny on the Bounty.

The pleasant Spanish village adopted its city charter in 1900. An ideal climate, with average daily temperatures of 72^{o}F in the summer and

$66^{O}F$ in the winter, and a spectacular shoreline made it a northern countryside retreat for the artistic, the religious, the military, the ancient, and the rich. Earthquakes regularly reduced their theaters, adobe missions, presidios and palatial haciendas to rubble. Immediately after tremblers desist, the residents set about to restore and improve their monuments. Nothing apparently dismays Santa Barbarbans for long. The intrepid sea and quaking earth may contribute to the laid back culture one senses soon after immigration.

This laid back ambience is difficult to track down, but I feel it central to project context. To fail to recognize it is to miss an integral component of "ho hum" days in paradisiacal Santa Barbara. A UCSB university teacher of narrative writing reminded me that John Updike wrote about Santa Barbara women rolling down the aisles of the A & P, clad in swimwear proclaiming their place in the sun. And a state rehab employee told me of seeing a well-to-do young man wearing jeans and a rock-and-roll T-shirt at a funeral. A bank officer came close to the heart of the matter: "I would have been a branch manager [of a large coastal bank] years ago if I had chosen to move to L.A.," says Sally, an officer in the SB branch. "But, I'm doing just fine. I love my work. I prefer SB rays to LA ulcers." She and others let me know that people fight to stay in paradise. Sometimes you have to be aggressive to enjoy the fruits of being laid back. For example, "It's hard to be a young special education teacher in SB when a PhD wants the job, too."

Two businessmen in their early 30s talked to me about the "no problem, mellow attitude of the laid back culture." They observed, "After a while you get to see the rush-rush for what it is. There is no sense

rushing to tomorrow. Be cool, it will come. And there's no sense worrying about debts, problems, promotion, mortgages...anything can be fixed if it's worth fixing. Life can be fun. It's all pretty simple really."

A graduate student at UCSB mused, "I've been spending 24 years learning how to do it [be laid back]. It means being tolerant -- with a dash of complacency. It is definitely a UCSB descriptor. It can be self-satisfaction. It's pretty much 'white.' We're here: we've got our place in the sun. Being laid back is real positive for enjoying what life has to give you and real negative in its arrogance and self-centeredness." Yes, Santa Barbara is laid back.

Another ingredient in this transition project that may set it apart from other school-district-based transition sites is the size of the community. A parent trainer, also the mother of a severely handicapped child, moved from Los Angeles to Santa Barbara to "get out of the rat race."

> We live where we work. This means we have neighbors who are key actors in companies here. We go to church and civic clubs with others involved in the larger scenario of making transition a reality. And, finally, our size makes it all seem possible, manageable. When I lived in L.A., it was extremely difficult to see where a project issue began or ended in time, space, personnel. The budget was the only factor that seemed knowable, definable.

I shall now turn to a long "footnote" on how educational evaluators might get from fieldwork a deeper sense of the local ambience.

Check the Election Results

With most of my informants I explored the issue of how an outsider could get a sense of the local scene. Their comments and suggestions provided the grist for this footnote. A district administrator observed that the Chamber of Commerce (C of C) was always willing and able to

provide a sketch of a community, outlining its business, educational, recreational, and social resources. I found the C of C literature confirmed aspects of the picture I had after a day or two in the community, but it added little and introduced no surprises. The C of C source may help ready an outside evaluator prior to visiting the site.

A California transplant (of 15 years) suggested that evaluators might read election results and analyses in the newspaper the day after local, state, and federal elections. She recalled how it helped her better understand the "particular political values of the Gold Coast Californian."

So I took her advice and read the Santa Barbara New Press coverage of the November 4 congressional, gubernatorial, and local races. Her advice proved sound. The analyses informed me about local context in ways I found surprising. I shall mention three. First the local voter turnout was almost twice the state average (74% to 42%) and was well above national figures (34%). Second, on a proposition to make English the official language of the state (supported by 75% of the voters), a majority of the Hispanic vote went for the proposition. Third, a landslide statewide defeat of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and two of her co-justices (75% voting for their opponents) after 8 years in office was tempered somewhat locally (60% voting for their opponents). Community values among registered voters exercising their franchise appeared to include: (a) active community participation; (b) chauvinistic patriotism; and (c) support for capital punishment.

These value-laden issues were but tips of a complex iceberg. Results of county and township supervisor races and of other ballot propositions relating to pollution control and salaries of public officials were provocative and revealing. In sum, it would appear worthwhile for outside

evaluators to check the local newspapers on the first Wednesday in November of even years for hints at local values.

So much for context and notions about method. The first of three major themes (parents, transition, and evaluation) follows. It concerns parents of severely handicapped children and minority parents with disabled children.

Parents

Two of my most enthusiastic, forceful interviewees were mothers of severely handicapped children. They valued the project's contributions to their own goal of a better life for their children and for themselves. They were strong, no-nonsense women with practical goals couched in large social realities: "We are used to things folding My son was 'neurologically handicapped,' 'developmentally disabled'...you name it...before the project, during the project, and will be after the project. The buck stops right here (index finger to breastbone)."

Many years before one is thinking about the transition needs of a high school student there have been grave social issues considered, partly caught up in in identification of very young children with special needs. Lori and Bill Granger have written a best-seller expose of the school's misdiagnosis of their son Alec as being mentally retarded in The Magic Feather (Sutton Publ., 1986). Other social agencies fare no better in their parental view of special education in general and its maltreatment of their son in particular. Parents' attitudes can make or break the schools' special education programs.

At the center of a successful transition project will be the parents of severely handicapped students. The more severe the child's disability, the more the parent will be concerned with transition. There is a

corollary: the older the child gets, the more realistic the parents' expectations become. A junior high teacher observed, "It's here they start getting scared. They (children) aren't growing fast enough...they [parents] can't hide it [child's disability] any further." And, within those ranks will be a core group o knowledgeable, purposeful, seasoned women. Their educational, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds may range widely but their purpose and character often are very much alike.

Very few fathers are truly co-partners in the rearing of a severely handicapped child. It has been claimed that the divorce rate is far above average in these families. The child's needs and demands are several, and persistent. In a sense, they define the lives of these mothers.[1] They deeply impress one with their firm resolution to secure societal support for their ultimate goal, the maximum reasonable independent life for their children. Their message is clear, simple, forceful: "Everyone deserves a choice. <u>Everyone</u>. <u>Now</u>!"

These women will do what it takes: attend meetings, volunteer time, agitate, demand, beg. "But the parents we could count on 20 years ago...really the mothers...are not in the cards. Women are out of the home. The volunteer pool has shrunk to a puddle." Parents are seen as "our greatest resource"; "the driving force behind the project"; "a pain in the ass"; "the reality check on our efforts"; and "the slumbering giant that will come of age." This last view has particular relevance for ethnic parents of SH youth. xican-American parents in particular.

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1. Peculiarly, in Santa Barbara the child is much more likely to be a son than a daughter. One counselor (14 years) said he "always had about 2/3 boys to 1/3 girls in the program."

"They Just Don't Come"

It might be a straightforward task to describe failure to involve minority parents in transition project activities if the cause were leadership insensitivity or failure to try. Such was not the failings in Santa Barbara. Nor was there an emerging uneasiness such as that described by T. S. Eliot in "Little Gidding": "Not known because not looked for. But heard, half heard." The white upper- middle-class leadership was aware of nonparticipation of Hispanic parents, in this project and in the special education services in general. They sent home messages in English and in Spanish. They created a plan whereby Hispanic parents were telephoned and told about each program, invited to attend meetings, and encouraged to ask questions by a person fluent in Spanish and English. "We had a Spanish interpreter at a potluck dinner, but none came I cannot understand. On the phone they sound so interested," recalled an Anglo mother of a SH child. The bottom line of all this was, "They just don't come "

Some project workers, impatient for progress, were critical of the call for extra time and energy for recruitment and involvement of Hispanic parents. They pointed to honest efforts made to assure that Hispanic parents got the information about resources for their handicapped child. "Of course the notices should be in Spanish, we aren't trying to keep things a secret!" But they felt that "undue" attention to recruiting the participation of Hispanic parents "may result in less effort devoted to the parents and children ready and willing to use all the help we can get."

The Mexican-American mother was seen by the frustrated Anglo as having an inappropriately low appreciation of the importance of time.

Failure to attend meetings, arriving late, and missing appointments are offered as indicators of Mexican-American mothers' devaluation of project time. They are seen as not understanding the child's need for special resources outside the home.

I spoke with two Mexican-American scholars at the UCSB Education Department about the apparent unwillingness of Mexican-American parents to use educational and social services available to their handicapped children. They brought to my attention several matters that had not occurred to me--and perhaps not to school authorities. They confirmed a few perceptions with which I was familiar. They spoke in paraphrase:

> How am I supposed to leave eight kids at home to attend a school meeting?
>
> Look, I am already embarrassed for not knowing the political/social system in general. Is it so surprising I would not use the educational system, too?
>
> Maybe, just maybe, the extended Mexican-American family is <u>better</u> at supporting SH children than what the school offers.
>
> A family is <u>supposed</u> to take care of its kids. If a special kid is sent to it by God, then it is all the more incumbent on the family to take care of it.
>
> If a Mexican-American parent has to go to the school or other agencies for special services it may be seen as a sign that the family has failed. Just like the gringos: abandon your kids to social agencies!
>
> If my kid is not normal <u>I</u> have failed. But it is my responsibility to take care of her/him. Unless the family has been Anglicized, the other children of the family must share the responsibilities for the handicapped child.
>
> If the gringos really wanted to help the SH Mexican-American child they would tear a page out of their manuals for aiding the elderly and give the <u>family</u> money to help the SH child at home.

The school and its sister agencies could do worse than pay attention to these messages in restructuring efforts to get better services for the

Mexican-American child in need of special help. The message from these scholars, both of whom were born and raised outside the USA, is:

> Schools had better start restructuring programs to meet the local conditions. The lack of bilingual staff members to make a program run is a pressing problem. Mexican-American parents have to be the architects of their own special education services network. If parents continue to feel no ownership, there is little that transition projects can do to increase participation. Communiques, in print or by phone, in English or *en Espanol*, will be met with passive resistance. Federal, state, and local programs have to trust local leadership to adapt to local conditions. (Resources are there, if the ownership is felt. "You should see the $10,000 weddings that come out of the barrio.")
>
> In every district there is a key casa or two. It is *there* that the meetings have to take place. *In safety*. It is there that the school people must go and take it day by day. Forget the long-range planning. What can you do for my child *today*? Do it. And do something else tomorrow without being asked to do it.... Arrange a second meeting. Talk about what you did for that *one child* that everyone there knows. Then use the VTR you brought along to show Mexican-American kids at a camp for kids with special needs...whatever. Acknowledge that you understand their feelings that "God has given you this child as a special challenge." If you can't do that with honest-to-God empathy, don't go to the casa--get someone else who can. After really *doing* something for one of the children in the neighborhood, and after showing your VTR, take a family or two to see the site of an educational/social service. Don't snow them. Just let them look. Talk to them in Spanish about the relevance of this for their child/children. Set up another meeting perhaps at another home, if it feels right.

The two professors had more, much more, about how to approach the parents who "just don't come." One thing about which they were in total agreement was the need to *pay* these parents for participating as parent trainers, as aides, and helpers. They also recommended that the school may want to conduit as much money as it can through the church, the Catholic Social Services agency, those who *do* have a positive history of successful work with recent Mexican-American immigrants.

With this soliloquy they ended our interview: "Don't forget, there's a good chance that I am illegal, so I have no right to services. Even if you tell me I have the right I sure don't want to get sent back...again. And for sure I am not coming to a meeting in a place that I don't understand, to talk about something that embarrasses me, with people I don't trust, in a language I can't use. But I will always be polite to you on the phone."

The parent role is a major dimension and a challenge for all who design, manage, or participate in transition projects. A second major theme that emerged from my interviews is the ultimate in obviousness--so obvious as to be missed until I was a month into the study. What is transition?

What Is Transition?

Each participant in the transition process has a sense of what she or he hopes for, expects, wants. Transition projects appear to offer a variety of valuable experiences to a participating student, parent, caregiver or administrator. For a long-suffering mother of a SH son it means: "Progress! Not much -- but progress! Before this the sheltered workshop was the only non-choice choice. We have been fighting for change...and we will be vigilant not to lose what we have won." Each of us knows at least some of what we want.

But the addition of the hopes, expectations, and wants of a second person may create a problem, especially if there are conflicting goals, needs, or actions. Problems also occur when participants with agreed-upon goals do not share a vision of the ways to achieve them. There are arguments.

Some see the way to overcome arguments about defining "transition" is to "do it" to a student and point to the successful case as it. When the transition project enthusiast points to a successful placement of a 20-year-old former student as a case of gainful employment, the listener may still remain unconvinced. (If the example cannot be given, the doubter is also unconvinced, of course.) An agency administrator dubious about the use of the "great example":

> They say they have the employer contacts. It isn't obvious to me.
>
> You have to be wary of the great example. It may be a tokenism trap.
>
> "Look what we found on the beach, a jewel! Let's polish it. See how pretty it is!" No concern for how many broken shells there are on the beach. "Let's polish it!" How likely is it we'll find another one? How was it found in the first place? Is it indigenous? Is it an artifact of a previous beach party? I could go on and on. One great example doth not a (transition) program make.
>
> The "guru of transition," Lou Brown, has a class act. But in fact his stella study had very small Ns. There's a lot of transition B&S without much A&E. [I asked for clarification.] "B,A,S,E!" We always seem to have to pretend to have a strong base in education before it is there. It's sad.

For some, transition is essentially getting interagency agreements to work. Without them, there can be no transition.

Interagency Agreements

The degree of success attributable to the project's efforts to pursue interagency agreements (IAA) depends on the person telling the story. The project's directors featured IAA in my in-task interview, as did the chairwoman of the project's steering committee. Roughly the ascription of success parallels the amount of involvement with IAA on the part of the informant, with a few notable exceptions. The project leadership indicated that

> the cooperation we have achieved will be permanent. What used to be a ritualistic sign-them-and-forget-them attitude toward

> interagency agreements has been changed due to this project's efforts. They are more than formal paper shuffling. There's life in those documents now. That is a structural change that will outlive this project.

This view was echoed by the Chairwoman of the Steering Committee. She said that a business and school alliance had been started that was important and would be durable.

> We have formed an alliance here that can serve as a model for interagency agreements. We have taken a marketing approach that the school people never have taken. That assures us of success. If you can't sell your product to the other agencies they aren't going to buy it. It's just that simple...I think we have been <u>very</u> successful in our interagency agreement effort. There is more to be accomplished. I am confident we can do it.

Others in the school district were less certain of the extent of interagency cooperation. They had not been involved directly in the district's efforts to create meaningful IAA's. They said they felt good work had been undertaken and that the results had been positive. However, several of these "hearsay" witnesses went on to comment on the "poor" or "spasmodic" or "fading" participation of industry/business representatives in the project: "I never see the same agency people twice."

> They started going, then at a later meeting someone replaced them as the representative, and finally no one came. I don't think it was anyone's fault. They are just too busy to participate in meetings.

The view of the IAA component of the project from non-school personnel was more critical. One agency representative harshly observed,

> The IAA effort? Oh that's easy to summarize: wrong from the outset...doomed to failure. The contributing factors were several. First, the wrong conceptual model; second, the wrong style of presentation; and third, the wrong cast of characters.

This person works in a non-school agency serving populations with special needs. Offered in an objective manner, her observations built

upon the centrality of her "doomed to failure" feeling. "The IAA failure could not have been otherwise, given its school oriented leadership." She introduced me to another person who had attended a project meeting or two. He was "turned off by being told to 'Put on my thinking cap.' What the hell is this: an education/industry operation or ding-dong nursery school?" Another corroborated being put off by "teacherly" behavior, interestingly enough not on the part of educators but by a key business representative serving on the Steering Committee.

My gut feeling is that the business/industry component of the Santa Barbara IAA was a moderate success. I wish I could have gotten someone to open up on interagency problems, antagonisms such as vocational rehabilitation getting money for closing cases of kids who still need service. A key question might be, "Who owns these kids?" For four weeks I tried with no success to schedule two interviews with business representatives nominated by the project. Finally I heard from one that he "really hadn't attended enough meetings to know very much about the project." And the second called on the very day to cancel a long-standing appointment, observing that "others would be more helpful and informed about the Transition Project" than he.

The comment about IAA conceptual model "error" was provocative, leading me to interview an informant about another California transition project. The assertion was that the SB project's IAA failed because it began, "ran on and on, and died at the ideational level," whereas the other project (reputedly) began its IAA work with a handful of senior students and worked exclusively on answering questions about who had to be involved to move these students from school into the workforce. The IAA effort may have suffered from non-participation of major non-school agency decision-makers.

The industry non-participation issue aside, clear strides forward were claimed by many for the IAA efforts. Early doubters were converted: "I thought the IAA would get lost in the Tri-county bureaucracy for sure. Not so. In fact, other high schools are modeling programs after S.B.H.S." Another participant attributed IAA success to the "participation of live parents attending meetings. The mud slinging lessens. Finally 10 years after the law we get cooperation instead of competition! Credit the parents for some of that...Now the agencies at least have to appear to be working with one another."

The evaluation of a transition project should meet the question, "What is transition?" head on. It will be raised separately and disharmoniously by key players in a local setting. Despite the difficulty of developing a harmoniously shared view of transition, it appears possible to start and work hard on a transition project before forging a single definition. Some feel it may be <u>preferable</u> to begin a transition project without attempting to hammer out an answer to the question, "What is transition?" An evaluation planning specialist in the California state education agency had given this much thought.

> From my perspective it is impossible to move on this (statewide transition effort) until there is an agreement on the definition of transition. An operational definition that links resources to programs to outcomes. But we can't assess the quality of X until we know what X is. It's funny, though, in some odd sense you <u>can</u> get going on X...on the spirit of X without knowing exactly what it is...progress has been made in several districts with very loosely constructed statements defining transition....
>
> But it is not useful to evaluate these efforts until we (the state) and they (project directors) get our separate acts together. Transition is supposed to kick down the door between school and life. But who is responsible for what, when? Who has follow-up responsibility? Which data are to drive which decisions? We had 21 OSER projects in '85, nine in '86. We'd like to disseminate the 'best" transition project results....
>
> Transition is a general term for a lot of things. The state agency is coming to focus on outcome expectations such as

> employment, living conditions, interpersonal relations and integration into the community. These orient all our evaluations.
>
> But it is too early to tell. The whole effort is in "transition." We have a present objective of getting a shared vision.

His quintessential goal of a "shared vision" was echoed by several state regional and local special education administrators with transition responsibilities. No one saw a role for evaluation in this developmental aspect of transition projects. When I suggested the possibility of having an evaluation consultant assist them in clarifying state, regional and local answers to the question "What is transition?" I received reactions ranging from incredulity to puzzlement. There is an openness to hiring consultant help but evaluators need not apply. This is the domain of the "process facilitator," the O.D. specialist," or the "educational therapist"--not the evaluation specialist. "We need help getting competing agencies to put away the boxing gloves more than we need program outcome evaluation" said a SERN specialist. "Evaluation is by nature hurtful." Here, as elsewhere, I found very few who saw educational evaluation as a helpful experience. A few were open to the possibility of such occurring but thought it unlikely. "Evaluation should tell us what's good, what's worth sharing, and sometimes how to repair something worth saving," observed a state agency planner. "What it usually accomplishes is more like research; it ties dollars to programs to outcomes, if it is really good (evaluation)...usually there are no outcomes."[2]

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2. Could the TI/UI produce a set of 'What is transition?" probes with a companion set of programmatic consequences for local, regional, perhaps state use? Could it be in a Fred Goodman (U. of Michigan) game format? Could it be grist for parent-training mill workers and/or for groups of mixed role players struggling for a shared vision of what transition is?

Parents, the idea of transition, and evaluation are the three large topics of this report. We turn now to the third, evaluation.

What About Evaluation?

For the most part evaluation has not been seen as a vital force in transition projects. Because there is almost no two-way communication between local projects and the federal agency, the promise of evaluation (for local participants) is marginal at best. It will be an "add on," unrelated to the life, development, or restructuring of a project. As attempts are made to make project evaluations formative or responsive to federal initiatives, they will be burdened by rapid turnover of project officers in the federal agency.

The best the federal agency can hope for is a sensible compliance checklist that addresses key accountability issues, one that doesn't attempt to capture the value dimensions, the decision aspects, or the contextual relationships of local projects. Those things take expertise, energy, and local commitment, investments that cannot be matched at the federal level.

How People Check Transition Project Evaluations

During an early interview, a former resource teacher talked about her experiences with educational evaluation over the years (22 of them). As I reached for my interview questions in my briefcase, she pointed to a largish volume I had in my briefcase and said, "I thought you said a few questions!" I played along and facetiously claimed, "This happens to be a certified evaluation of the most successful transition project in the United States. Would you like to see it?"

"You're kidding?"

"If I am not, what would you be most interested in seeing in the report?"

"The first thing is: Who was involved? Were parents there? Were key agencies?"

The unplanned tactic became one of the more productive lines of inquiry throughout my interviews. The following are several of the responses, followed in parentheses by the interviewee's role in the project.

> The first thing is, who was involved? Were the key agencies really a part of the transition? Parents want to know that their kids will not drift into institutions, the streets [after high school]. Does the transition project have a structural framework that per...encourages kids to come back after they have left school? Is there a limit to the number of times? That's what I'd look to see. If those aren't there, I wouldn't pay too much attention to the report. (County Administrator)

> I'd like to see the curriculum. Does everything relate to employability? If it does, I won't think much of it. I know this is heresy, but everything in the curriculum doesn't have to [connect with employability]. How about a student's self-esteem? "Hey, I can <u>learn things</u>!" That's important too. A curriculum that helps youngsters understand connections, relations...my (the learner's) power...what a community is. That's a curriculum for transition. Has there been a balance between filling out job forms and knowing about knowing? (Resource Teacher)

Each subsequent interviewee was given an opportunity to express what she or he would look for (or does look for) in an evaluation report. Each person found the question easy to answer. I tried to preserve <u>the order</u> in which they itemized what they would do with such a report and listed their comments in 1, 2, 3, 4 order, even if they did not so enumerate.

Before turning to the verbatim responses, one overall observation about this group's familiarity and experience with "a good evaluation report" is warranted. Twenty-two of 30 had never seen what they considered a "good" evaluation report. Four said they had never seen an evaluation report. Of the remaining four, two had seen a "good" one. (One of them had written the only good evaluation she had seen.) Even so their collective responses reveal much about the perception of evaluation.

An administrator in a neighboring district said he had seen "one good evaluation effort in 31 years...It was a highly behavioristic project with simple data collection. Low inference. No extra claims."

Seems to me we have a lot of work to do. Here now are the encapusulated replies to my indirect question of what to look for in an evaluation report:

1. The Introduction: What it is setting out to do.
2. The Ending: How it all happened and if in fact it did happen.
3. Then I'd look to see if they measured the right things.
    a. Outcome tables
    b. Did they evaluate process?
    c. Did they measure the feelings of the participants?
4. I'd check again on the process measures-the committees, the strategy meetings, the networking.
5. Do they have a representation of the quality of cooperation? If the cooperation isn't there, long-term continuity won't occur.
6. Finally, the bottom line: how did they get the students from unemployment to employment? The kinds of placement, duration. "We wouldn't look good on that here."
7. Evaluations are typically for the funding source. They don't represent the reality of the day-to-day going on and outcomes of the local project. If I know this is a report for the feds to show you have spent the money wisely, I am not interested. It doesn't translate for me.

* * * * *

1. What do the parents say? Especially the reputable parents.

2. What do the students say? Is there evidence that it worked (in their eyes)?

3. I'd see who was involved. Was it really just the district? Is it another project in the school's own little world?

4. Then I'd look for their plan for transition. (No, I wouldn't turn to that first.)

5. Does the report acknowledge that this is the tip of the iceberg? This is what helps the most right now...this will help in the long run?

* * * * *

1. Of course I'd look for the only thing that really counts: the effectiveness of placements. How were the students prepared for them? Were they tracked and is there evidence of success?

2. Look for the quality of life--not just goal statements. Are they basically pursuing a career in the world of work? And do they stay there for many years?

3. Student numbers impress me. Anybody can cream a few and look good.

4. I'd look for lack of duplication of services between the agencies.

5. Look for indicators of working cooperatively--not competitively between the agencies.

6. For sure I'd check on evidence of parental awareness of the need for transition services, accessibility of help, on their participation in the IEP development (ITP).

7. And I'd look again at the creaming. It's one thing to take resource specialists' kids and place them on jobs versus profoundly handicapped kids. It's hard to get "good numbers" when working with the full range of kids.

* * * * *

1. Perhaps evaluation could take an Edward DeBono approach. In all likelihood I honestly wouldn't read an evaluation report.

2. If I did, I would sweep broadly and quickly for something of interest.

3. Sort it out into pluses and minuses for the players in the game: the teacher's, parent's, child's.

4. That's what I'd really look for: what is the quality of life for these kids? Is there real people evidence that shows the effectiveness of the services for the recipients?

5. When is educational evaluation going to discover visuals, graphics, videotape? The narrative should be supported by visual displays of the life that has supposedly improved.

* * * * *

1. Why did they want to do it?

2. What did they do?

3. I would avoid the statistics completely.

4. Look for the unmet needs, what was not being addressed, what they avoided.

5. I like to look for the difference between the flowering beginning and the bottom line summary's facts.

* * * * *

1. Quickly scan the table of contents.

2. Speed-read the preface and the introduction.

3. Get to the results as seen by the <u>operators</u> of the project--not the evaluation experts.

4. I'd read it the way I read a journal: scan, focus on the abstract, the results, and then dwell on anything that catches my interest.

* * * * *

1. I have worked with schools on this very topic and have a few strong opinions. First: the simpler the better; for example, does the line go up, or does the line go down? Second: the school's instinct is not to evaluate. They are interested in the absence of complaints about a project. That is the criterion of success, not outcome measures. That is followed by teacher improvement, excitement by the project. When the public is not bitching and the teachers are cooing you've got a successful project. Oh, add to that the ego gratification of the director. Be sure not to mention "research" or "evaluation" when you consult with a transition project. When they hear "research," do they run!

2. I would first Xerox a copy because you said it was "exemplary," and I would finally have <u>one</u> in my library!

3. I like fancy analyses. I like research with multidimensional scaling that pictorially represents concepts.

4. I'd look first at the table of contents to get the sophistication of the design. I'd examine one spot to see if it was merely a pre-post test design.

5. I'd look to their conclusions to see their claims and how they got the information to support the claims.

6. A quick check of what the authors claim are important outcomes is always a good test to see if you want to read more.

* * * * *

1. I always check to see who was involved. If I don't care who was involved, I don't care about the report.

2. Did they find out the parents' hopes and beliefs about the outcomes of the project? Can the kids come back? Is there a limit to the number of times?

3. What is their concept of curriculum? Everything in the TI curriculum doesn't have to relate to employability. How about the students' self-esteem: "Hey, I can learn!" Does the description of the curriculum convince me that it helps students to understand connections? Relations? My power? What a community is? All in all I want to see a curriculum that balances between filling out forms and keeping a job and knowing about knowing. If that isn't there, I don't care anything about the evaluation report.

* * * * *

1. I want to read the part that talks about success two years after being on the job. One hundred percent placement at the end of the program is fine--but it's not my criterion of success.

2. I tend to be cynical about any form of statistics.

3. If a report could be done that allows me to meet a family...the families of clients themselves.... The videotape portrayal of the family could help me immensely to understand, to evaluate the success of a program.

* * * * *

1. Student outcomes, which is really "job placements." That's all that counts. Longevity on the job and the quality demands of the job.

2. Description of living arrangements for kids.

3. The client's use of leisure time is something I'd look for.

4. Maybe I'd look for indications that the transition players' efforts to serve mutual clients had eliminated antagonistic intake processes.

* * * * *

1. You've got to check on the number of students processed, placed, evaluated: the end product.

2. All of the meetings wouldn't mean a thing to me. I want to know how the cake tastes. The ingredients don't count.

3. Follow-up data four years after placement would be nice.

* * * * *

1. Which jobs were involved?

2. Are the placements over-ambitious?

3. Who did the follow-up insofar as coaching and support was concerned?

4. What do the real parents say? (Parents of SH students.)

* * * * *

1. You've got to first figure out their terms. What counts as information?

2. Who collected the information?

3. How did the project get its results? Its techniques?

4. Then I'd stop and ask myself, is that something I'd want to achieve?

* * * * *

1. Look at the kids that were placed What were the limits? The successful project takes the full range of kids.

2. Look at teachers' expectations prior to the project.

3. Were the parents' expectations too high? Too low?

4. Evidence of administration overly controlling the project? Did the parents push it? The teachers follow?

5. At least a hint that the success the project is going to take credit for is stuff that has been going on for years.

6. How does the T-project actually run? How did they get by the obstacles? Prejudice against special kids? Industry's unwillingness to take a chance? How to get long-term support?

7. Discussion of failures. [If] no failures, don't believe the report.

* * * * *

1. First thing I'd look at are the characteristics of the population served. How severe are the disabilities? One can look good by creaming.

2. Second: the number served. If it is in L.A. and they served six, they could look good but undeservedly.

3. The kinds of employment options made available. Merely custodial?

4. The mean dollars income of the program's clients. If it is a job development transition project, is it more than token work?

5. How does (or doesn't) it address the non-work of people's lives? People don't totally work to live. Does it address the life style of clients during non-work hours? Contribute to the stability of their residential lives? Their physical well being?

6. Do students know how to function in the community? Can they get to work on time? Can they care for their bodies?

7. I pay very little attention to program descriptions. I have not seen a single non-self-serving evaluation of special education programs. They are gloss. Ninety-percent b.s.

8. I look for forms, ideas. <u>How</u> did they bring parents into the picture? How did they deal with the Department of Labor? How did they wedge the student into a reluctant industry?

9. Program descriptions are written for funding, refunding, donations, referral. There just isn't critical stuff available. What is available is East Coast...Virginia Commonwealth...a bit from NY (WA or OR). Moss, Bellamy...but theirs is a sales job, too.

10. Its credibility is high when I see the author address a problem that I recognize as a problem.

* * * * *

1. I'd zero in on the narrative outcomes first.

2. I turn to statistics only when I can't figure it out from narration.

3. Sometimes I look at what they were trying to accomplish.

4. Were <u>the</u> critical questions raised and were the project's answers approached in a reasonable manner?

* * * * *

1. Well, you have to forget the evaluation itself. You can get suckered into the form of it. I couldn't care less about whether they used an experimental design, were systematic this or that. Is there <u>anything</u> I can use?

2. Does it reveal a problem I care about?

3. Does it suggest overall and local approaches to remedying the problem?

4. Percentages will do just fine. Don't bust your ass deepening and mystifying.

5. I don't care who did the report. Are they available for interpretations?

6. The least valuable section of these educational evaluation reports are the 700 tests of the significance of the findings, and absence of straightforward, doable commentary. They kill my interest.

7. There is use for literature narrative. The New Yorker carried an anecdotal report on social service abuses. Nothing that lent itself directly to significant social policy development--but it alerted us to pitfalls we could create in our legislative development...things that would frustrate implementation. It helped as an antidote to policy-promise-delusions.

8. Evaluation reports can be useful if they help identify people who might be smart enough to help me in my tasks. So I suspect they should carry something about the creators' skills, interests, availability.

* * * * *

1. I can't even imagine opening the thing.

2. OK, I'll imagine. Does it say anything about how to get people to use other people's work in education?

3. Does it have something besides testimonials without outcome data?

* * * * *

1. I always start at the end: read the conclusions and interpretations.

2. Then I go to the beginning and see if the intentions are congruent.

3. Quickly sense the methodological mechanics, quick sense of the numbers.

4. What's the connection of the goals, to the change strategies to the effects on the clients?

5. I would not read the executive summary. (I was shocked! TD) They are too clipped. They have to be politically palatable.

6. If there were a case study included, which is unlikely, I would go to its conclusion as well to look for leaps from the case to the larger issue(s) which I would hope were there. If they are there, then I'd look at the case study.

7. Something that isn't in this report but which I keep waiting for is a Beta Max documentary with accompanying hard copy.

* * * * *

1. I wouldn't look at it. I'd have someone else do it for me. I'm tired of measuring.

2. Well, I'd tell the person to see if it was something we can use. Does it match with our current questions. We don't need more damn reports about SH kids not being employed. We don't need wonderful descriptions about classroom life for the SH kid.

3. Where are the kids? And are they out doing it? If you tell me that, then and only then will I want to know more.

4. If an evaluation revealed the mechanics of enhancing the process of achieving a shared vision of what transition is I could get interested.

* * * * *

1. The length of the view is stop number one. If the project hasn't got several years I'd be less than impressed with any of its findings.

2. Who have they claimed to serve? How many? How placed?

3. What I am always hoping to find is an R.B. Edgerton (UCLA sociologist) description of what really happened. Have you read the Cloak of Competence? When the California institutions were closed by Governor Reagan, Edgerton did a follow-up study that revealed the culture, the lives, the magazines they were reading...the social events.... It was so real...I am so visual. I am kinesthetic....It was Faulkner. I had a feeling for the quality of that former resident's life. I remember the description of the guy's ordering copies of Life and Readers' Digest to neatly array on his table. He couldn't read but he sure knew how to take on one task in this world: how to "pass" as a reader...achieve normalization.

Sometimes you experience a painful level of candor when an informant decides to level with you. Here's one:

> You want to know the real problem with evaluation? You are! The problems of transition are far away from the grant writers and the proposal readers and the visiting expert evaluators. You can't attack them at that level.
>
> Everytime a new grant occurs or an expert visits expectations are raised. When a person needs something, anything positive

> you say or do raises expectations. Once again you start to believe, "Gee, maybe we are going to get some help." But real problems are enduring. Visiting experts and two-year grants don't help. It's people in the trenches day in, year out, that make the sobering difference. Some of us need hope. Some need a sobering thought. The balance between them is important. That kind of stuff can never be in the minds of grant writers and visiting experts. I mean no harm to you personally. You just represent something I happen to think doesn't help.

An old pro in the state agency summed up several impressions of what others had said about the role of program evaluation in special education.

> Projects are afraid to cooperate with evaluators. They are afraid of losing funding. They are afraid they have made errors. They are afraid they have not done the job. So we get a lot of hesitation, even refusal [to cooperate in evaluations]. We (SDE) need to stop tying dollars to failure, tying money to avoiding making a mistake. If you chop off funding without finding how the mistake came to be you miss an opportunity (for understanding program development)....
>
> "We encourage self-deceit, over-claiming, smoke screening. It shows up even in the well established 'corner stone' centers of the movement. It makes me wonder if their images are well deserved."

What is to be made of all this? Much, I hope! Is there a pattern discernible that can be put to use in evaluation improvement? Is the surprising (to the writer) call for narrative and qualitative representation by the participants in this transition project a consequence of the writer's bias or something independent of that? I recommend other fieldworkers ask this question in their work and see if their results parallel mine.

One anomoly is apparent, for example. People in this study appeared to be interested in the topic of context being included in evaluation reporting. (Only one person did not appear to think it was of considerable importance.) Out of these discussions surfaced ideas for possible use in capturing the values in local context (e.g., Chamber of Commerce, voter analyses, novelists, portrayals).

But when we played the game of quick review of an evaluation report devoted to an excellent transition project, not one interviewee turned to context first, and only one turned to it second or third.

What can be made of this? Three explanations at least can be offered. It could be that the match between exotic and local context isn't very important for them as evaluation report readers. Or, the opportunity for assessing such a match is so rarely provided by evaluation report writers that it doesn't come readily to mind. Or, the "good" evaluation report simulation wasn't a fair test of the proposition.

Besides the three major concerns of this story (parents, transition, and evaluation), we have concerned ourselves with context. As is always the case with stories of educational practice, minor themes come to view, themes we are unable to wedge nicely into the story. Often we are unable to discard them. What follows now is a coterie of such themes.

Melange

Coming to know new people (or oneself anew) was acclaimed by several as a positive side effect of participating in the project. For some, the many meetings served as social connector as much as facilitator of transition project activity. Indeed, for a handful of my informants, connecting with new persons was the favorable outcome of their project involvement. This was particularly evident when encountering a special attendee having high status, professionally, socially, or politically.

> Seeing him attend really impressed me. He is seen as the czar of psychological services for the tri-county area. His commitment caused me to keep attending. I would have dropped out. He is a top quality player. Getting to know him better made the meetings, which I must honestly say were disappointing, ...If they had been able to attract and keep other top quality players involved they would have come close to really doing something with interagency agreements.

Thus spoke an administrator from one of the nonschool social service agencies. Another informant, a teacher, praised the project for providing much needed social opportunities.

> We now know one another better. Before the project I knew some of them by name only or had maybe heard about them. Now I know what they like for lunch, that their youngest son has Downs, how they feel about sheltered workshops. I think the project served a purpose beyond its original purpose. It wasn't supposed to especially enable the players to get to know and trust one another. But that happened here and there. And I feel that was the most important thing it accomplished for some of us...of course some people didn't attend meetings so we didn't get very far with them or their agencies.

For one the project was an opportunity to recharge an inert special-education-teacher career.

> I was stifled, unhappy...felt useless. I'd like to think of myself as a potentially creative person outside the classroom. I hoped I would get an idea about doing something from this project. I was ready to break out of the doldrums. Well, it happened! This project let me cut across many areas. I got into job coaching, computers, curriculum work...I became chair of the Language Arts committee which included math. We have met 3-5 hours monthly and there have been lots of individual hours. I have been an active professional before earlier in my career (recounted activities of 15 years ago)...My career is now revived. People see what I can do [because of her project work]. It sort of evolved. The more I did, the more I saw how it was working out.

And finally we have the steering committee chair, a high school graduate who has worked her way up the ladder in a statewide banking system to Director of Personnel. She is in her mid 30s, is obviously pleased with her accomplishments and thoroughly enjoys the interpersonal dimension of the project.

> The fun part of the project is the chance this has given me to talk. I can't stand silence. I like to finish things. I like to get school people to see how to market ideas. It's the same as selling merchants' Master Charges. Find out what keeps them busiest? What would save them time? Get going, give them service if it breaks down...and find out what else we can do for you. I like teaching school people about business practices...I guess I could say I enjoyed that [teaching] the most about the project.

Others echoed the "connections" theme in their recounting the benefits of the project as they saw them. For most, the emphasis given to self-renewal or interpersonal relationships was not as great as it was for those represented above. But the general importance cannot be denied. Projects serve to advance personal and interpersonal agendas as surely as they do achieve their espoused goals. On occasion the personal intents appear to be the story of an individual's participation in a project such as this. The life of one junior high teacher was greatly enhanced:

> We enthusiastically worked on the curriculum even though the project was focused on the high school. So much free time was given. I've had so many inservices before that were no fun. This was. Great exchange of ideas. We aren't institutionalized yet [as to project outcomes] and we need more experience working with these kids. But the barriers are ignorance, not mean spiritedness, and economics (paid job coaches), not lack of vision.... We now need a lot of job niches, not committee meetings. I think we're on the edge of something very important here.

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